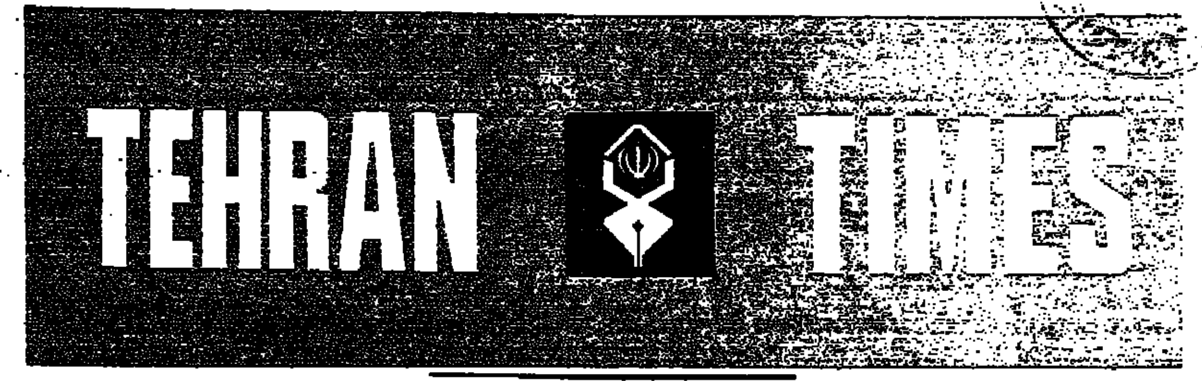
U.S., Russia to Meet Soon on NATO Enlargement

WASHINGTON — Washington remains in permanent contact with Moscow on a cooperation agreement between NATO and Russia and bilateral meetings on the subject could be held soon, the State Department said Friday.

"I do anticipate some upcoming meetings between the United States and Russia on the NATO-Russia charter issue," State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

(Contd on Pg. 14)



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Iran Welcomes Return of Australian, New Zealand Envoys

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi here on Friday night assessed as positive the return of the ambassadors of Australia and New Zealand to Tehran.

Mohammadi underlined, "We will take into account the steps taken by these two countries in determining their future relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran."

(Contd on Pg. 14)

France Seeks Better Relations With Iran

Tehran Times Service

PARIS — France hopes for better relations with Iran following the current row between Tehran and the European community over the politicized Mykonos Court.

In an interview with the Arabic daily *Al-Hayat* published Saturday, French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said Iran was a great country occupying a strategic position in the Middle East, an AFP report said.

Asked about the recent decision by EU states to suspend their policy of "critical dialogue" with Tehran and recall their ambassadors for consultations, De Charette said he hoped that "we will emerge from this crisis."

However, De Charette said: "Iran is a great country which occupies a strategic place in this part of the world."

"Its people have a major role to play in the future and we wish to have a mutually beneficial dialogue with this country and this people."

The French Foreign Minister said the EU ambassadors in Tehran would "of course" return to their posts following the consultation with their respective governments.

President Inaugurates Several Industrial, Development Projects

Photo: Abbas Takin

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Four zinc manufacturing units in Zanjan, Bandar Abbas and Yazd came on stream simultaneously on Saturday inaugurated by President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The president arrived in Zanjan Province yesterday and was warmly welcomed by the representative of Vali-e Faqih (supreme religious Jurisprudent), Friday prayer leader and governor of Zanjan at the airport.

Upon arrival and addressing the reporters, President Rafsanjani underlined that his day-long visit to the province was aimed at implementing several development and industrial projects in Mahanshan, Zanjan Province; Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province and Yazd Province.

The capacity of the four zinc manufacturing units will be in-

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Governing Coalition Chooses Gujral for Prime Minister

NEW DELHI, India — A fractious governing coalition settled on India's highly respected foreign minister to replace Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, United News of India said Saturday.

The news agency, quoting unnamed United Front sources, said the formal announcement of Inder Kumar Gujral as the Front's new leader would come later following a meeting of the coalition's decision making steering committee.

President Shankar Dayal Sharma was expected to endorse the United Front's choice Sunday or Monday. Gujral can govern with the support of the Congress Party, which toppled Gowda and then promised to back his United Front once the coalition settled on a new leader.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Netanyahu's Job Hangs by a Thread

BAIT-UL-MOQADDAS — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces an uncertain political future even if he escapes charges of influence-peddling, experts said Saturday.

Israel's state prosecutor said she has reached a decision and will announce Sunday (today) whether to approve police recommendations and charge Netanyahu over the botched appointment of an attorney general.

According to state television, the prosecutor, Edna Arbel, is unlikely to indict the right-wing prime minister on charges of fraud and breach of trust because the police do not have a strong case against him. But she is expected to "severely" criticize Netanyahu.

Arbel also will reportedly act on police recommendations to charge Arieh Deri, head of the powerful Shas Party, who is suspected of attempted blackmail in the "bibigate" scandal, it said.

But even if Netanyahu is not charged he will not be off the hook, analysts said.

Hanan Cristal, political commentator for state radio, said Netanyahu would have to fend off a

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Senior Officers on Iranian Army

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — On the occasion of April 18, The Islamic Republic of Iran's Army Day, the *Tehran Times* held a round table attended by three senior officers of the army, Brigadier General Hassan Barati, Brigadier General Amir Rostami and Brigadier General Ataollah Salehi.

The participants expressed their views on the present situation of the army, the experience acquired from the imposed war, the defense budget and the Iranian army's status at the regional and international levels.

Barati, 47, who is one of the deputy commanders of the army, said that, in the near future, the country will attain self-sufficiency in manufacturing armaments and even airplanes thanks to the army's remarkable progress.

"The army's present capability is fifty times as much as in the past, and its organization is efficient and carefully planned," he underlined, adding that the present progress of the army, and the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran in general, is mostly due to the experience acquired in the course of the eight-year sacred defense.

"Today, some military academies in other countries convey to their students the knowledge and experience obtained by us during the imposed war," Barati noted.

He further said, "During my recent visit to Pakistan, the senior Pakistani military officers asked me to compile and record the strategies and tactics adopted by the Iranian army in the imposed-war era and let the Pakistani army study them. Presently, we are busy doing this and some of those already recorded and compiled are being taught in the military academies."

Rostami, 43, another deputy commander of the army, said, "The army's present capability has never been matched in the past." The army personnel, well-disciplined and devoted to the Islamic values, are prepared to make great sacrifices in order to safe-

(Contd on Pg. 14)

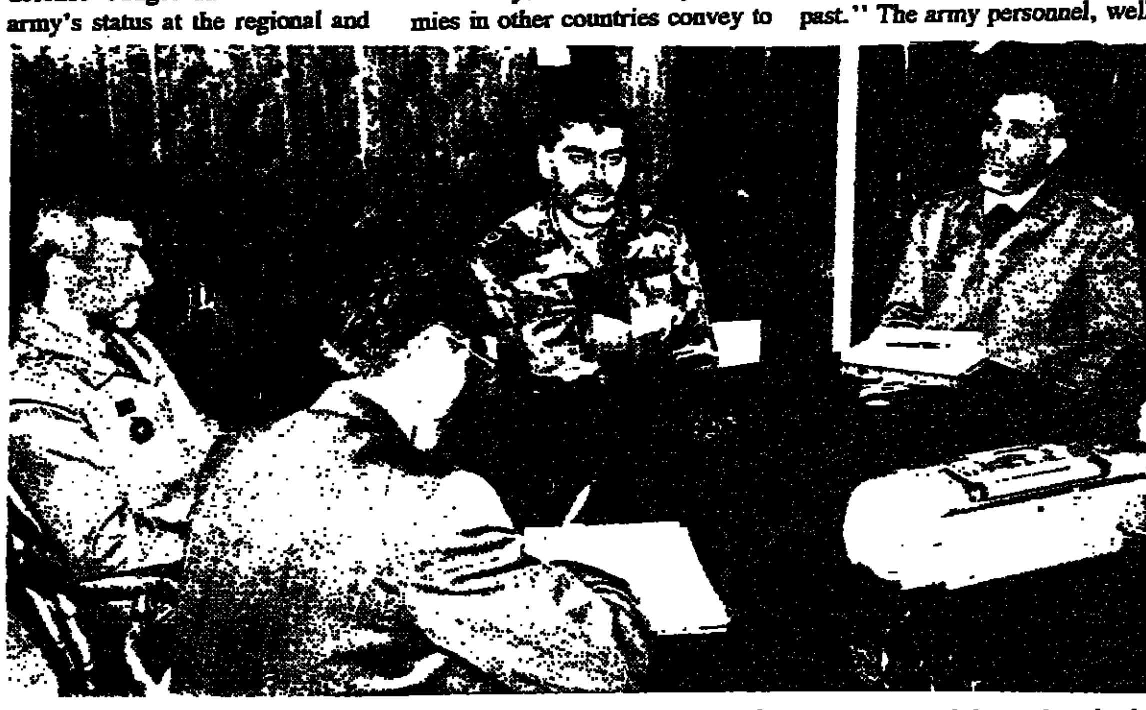


Photo: Abbas Takin

Berlin Court Serves Zionist, U.S. Interests



DORRI-NAJAFABADI

By Ali Rezvani Moqaddam

MECCA — A prominent Muslim cleric and Majlis representative, here on the Hajj pilgrimage, said that the court in the Mykonos case was politically tainted and that the judge that rendered the verdict of the court exceeded his powers.

In an exclusive interview with the *Tehran Times*, Hojjatoleslam Dorri-Najafabadi, who is head of the powerful Plan and Budget Committee of the Majlis, further said that the court hurt the sentiments of Muslim nations by putting into question the integrity of political personalities and clerics.

"A country which itself is a victim of countless cases of terrorism and for whose cause political and religious characters have been sacrificed and whose many sacred objectives have been ruined is again the target of arrogant powers and Zionist propaganda," Najafabadi said.

He said the enemies whose hands are soaked with the nation's blood now subject the oppressed people under questioning on malicious reports of anti-revolutionary activities.

Further condemning the German judicial system by saying that it did not have the independence expected of the judiciary, the Majlis representative further said that the verdict clearly showed it was a tool of U.S. and Zionist interests and therefore, the court's jurisdiction to try the case was questionable.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

IRGC Commander Dismisses Claim of Iranian Tie-Up in Dhahran Bombing



REZAEI

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Major-General Mohsen Rezaei, here Saturday dismissed the latest propaganda of a tie-up between an IRGC personnel and a Saudi national arrested recently in Canada in connection with the bombing in Dhahran of an apartment complex that resulted in the death of 26 persons.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

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In the Name of God

The hypocrites fear lest a chapter should be sent down to them telling them plainly of what is in their hearts. Say: Go on mocking, surely Allah will bring forth what you fear.

(HOLY QORAN) (9:64)

OPINION

Neither Iran Nor EU Wants Deterioration in Relations

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette have unequivocally stressed on maintaining cordial ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Kinkel said at Bundestag on Thursday that it was imperative to maintain links with Tehran. "We don't have the right to break off lines of dialogue with Iran.... A bad period must not destroy what it has taken years to put in place.... No policy in the region, in the long term, can meet with success without or against Iran."

In an interview with the Arabic Daily Al-Hayat, Herve De Charette said on Saturday, "Iran is a great country which occupies a strategic position in the Middle East.... Its people have a major role to play in the future and we wish to have a mutually beneficial dialogue with this country and this people." On the recent crisis in Iran-EU ties, he said, "We will emerge from this crisis."

The statements of the two European diplomats indicate that Europe has on one hand realized Iran's key role in the region and on the other it is determined to maintain cordial ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words Europe is not interested in fanning the flames of the present crisis unnecessarily created in its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Without any doubt Iran too does not want a crisis in its ties with the EU provided European countries realize the sensitivity of our people to any sacrilege of our values.

Basically there is an understanding between the two sides that Iran-Eu cordial ties are in both sides' interests.

Iran has time and again proved its sincerity in maintaining good relations with the EU which has thus far paved the way for an active German-French role in the crisis management in the Middle East.

For instance it was due to Iran-Germany close cooperation that the bodies of Israeli and Lebanese soldiers were swapped last year. According to Kinkel it was due to Iran-Germany cordial ties that even when superpowers faced any difficulty they used to contact Germany to mediate to solve the problem.

It is unfortunate that the U.S. and Zionist circles have succeeded in putting the continuation of such a cordial cooperation to question.

The statements of Charette and Kinkel are good testimonies to the fact that the European countries are under pressure of the U.S. and Zionist circles. This is why they forego their national interests for the sake of appeasing Washington and Tel Aviv.

Given the statements of Kinkel and Charette, the Iranian nation expects the foreign ministers of the EU to take a rational stance in their April 29-30 meeting to pave the way for a dynamic cooperation between the two sides.

Any irrational stance by the EU foreign ministers will definitely serve the interests of the Zionists and the U.S. which will be virtually to the detriment of the European countries.

Speaker Warns Nation Against Western Cultural Onslaught

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri here yesterday warned the nation against the dangers of Western cultural onslaught.

Speaking at the 4th Meeting of the Leader's Representatives in the Construction Jihad Ministry, the Majlis speaker underlined that the cultural onslaught is a widespread and complicated issue that requires due attention.

The speaker said the enemies of Islam very cleverly direct their cultural onslaught towards destroying the achievements of the Islamic Revolution.

He added that history has proven that the enemies had always carried out their nasty plots under the pretext of religion and by the means of pseudo-clergies.

Nateq Nouri expressed satisfaction over the fact that the plots of enemies for separation of religion from politics were thwarted by the presence of the cautious clerics.

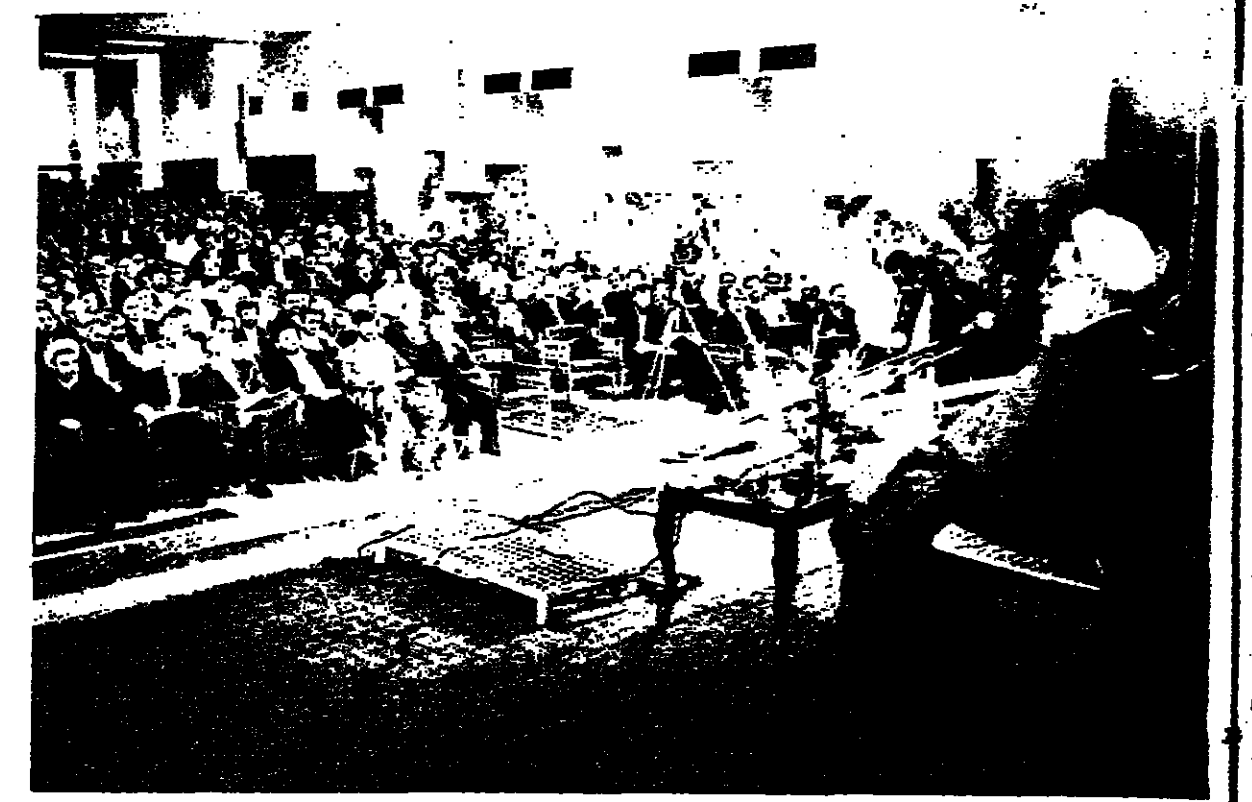
Greek Official: EU-Iran Ties Will Be Back to Normal Soon

Tehran Times Service

ATHENS — Iran's Ambassador to Athens Mehdi Khandaqabadi met with Greek Euro Deputy Paraskevas Avegerinos Friday evening and discussed with him Iran's relations with the European Union in the aftermath of the provocative decision of a Berlin court in the Mykonos case.

Avegerinos said that it was not in the interest of EU to spoil its relations with the Islamic world, particularly with countries like Iran which have a great influence on Muslims.

Saying that there were some who wished to damage EU-Iran ties, Avgerinos expressed his confidence that very soon EU-Iranian ties will return to their normal course, an Iranian Embassy source told IRNA.



TEHRAN (April 19) — Majlis Speaker Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri addresses the audience at the nationwide gathering of managers and experts of industrial sector.
Photo: Abbas Kowsari

Shahbazi: Iran Ready to Help Maintain Regional Security

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The chief of the joint staff of the Islamic Republic's Army Brigadier General Ali Shahbazi said here on Saturday that Iran is ready to encounter any threat posed by the arrogant powers in the region.

The general said that the propaganda campaign launched by Iran's enemies which is aimed at projecting Iran as a threat to its neighbors is part of the plots hatched by arrogant powers to further plunder the natural resources of the oil-rich Persian Gulf states.

"Iran is not a threat to the region, but rather it is a protector of the neighboring Muslim countries against the aggression of the arrogant powers including the Zionist regime," he stressed.

Underlining that the Islamic Republic's Army is duty-bound to defend Iran's land, sea and air borders and its territorial integrity, he expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate with its neighboring countries, especially the littoral states of the Persian Gulf, to maintain the security of the region.

General Shahbazi further referred to the army personnel's endeavor to achieve self-sufficiency, saying that over 300 projects, including those for the manufacture of missiles rigged with electronic equipment, tactical and training aircraft and Zulqadr tanks, have been completed successfully and other projects are nearing completion.

Concerning Iran's defense budget, he said that in the period from March, 1995-March, 1996, the budget had a total of $850 million, which was much less than those of other regional countries. The general reiterated that the Western mass media are baselessly exagerating Iran's defense budget to justify the presence of outsiders in the region.

Yazdi: Legal Action Will Be Taken Against Violators of Electoral Law

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The head of Judiciary Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi said here Saturday that the judicial system will prosecute those who violate the electorl law in the forthcoming presidential elections slated for May 23.

Addressing a group of executive officials of the Judiciary, the ayatollah noted that according to the Articles 33, 34, 71, 94 of the Electoral Law approved by the Majlis, the courts of law are empowered to take legal action against the violators of the above law.

He added that in view of the importance of the elections and in order to defend people's votes, the Judiciary would supervise the presidential elections with full care and attention.

"The Judicial officials will remain completely impartial during the elections," Atyatollah Yazdi stressed.

Iran's Accredited Ambassador to Ecuador Appointed

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to Colombia Hossein Sheikh Zeinuddin has been named as the country's accredited ambassador to Ecuador here on Saturday, IRNA reported.

The appointment was proposed by Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and approved by President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Habibi Congratulates Armenian PM

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Iran's First Vice President Hassan Habibi here Saturday cabled a felicitation message to the Armenian Prime Minister Robert Kocharian for his appointment to the post.

Habibi, in his message, expressed hope that the mutual relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries will further improve during the new premier's office.

Fazlallah: Any Aggression Against Iran Will Cost Dearly

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The prominent Lebanese alim, Allama Seyed Hossein Fazlallah, on Friday cautioned the U.S. and European Union against attacking Iran, saying any such aggression will cost the aggressors dearly.

According to IRNA, in his Friday prayer sermons in southern Beirut, he condemned U.S. and Israeli threats against Iran saying that accusing Iran of producing long-range missiles or sending Russian-made arms to the Islamic resistance are all parts of U.S. conspiracies to isolate Tehran.

Amoli: Berlin Court's Remarks Against Iran a Plot

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The baseless remarks and the verdict of the German court was politicized and a conspiracy against the Islamic system of Iran, Friday prayer leader of Qom Ayatollah Abdullah Javadi Amoli said on Friday.

Ayatollah Amoli said that they (Germans) had issued the verdict without asking Iran to offer any explanation and solely based on testimony of certain persons, whose hands were stained with Iranian people's blood, an IRNA report said.

Lauding Iranian people for their protest rallies in condemnation for Germany's insult on the Iranian nation, Ayatollah Amoli said that Germany had lost its credit and dignity among the Iranian government and nation by adopting such a measure.

Presidential Candidates' Registration to Start on Thursday



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The registeration of the candidates standing in the forthcoming presidential elections will begin on Thursday, April 24 and will last for a period of five days, the head of Iran's Elections Headquarters Ali Tabesh announced on Saturday.

The candidates' official presidential campaign will start after the Interior Ministry reveals the list of the candidates. The publicity acitivities can go on until 24 hours before the elections.

Saying that the seventh presidential elections will be held on May 23, Tabesh added that after the registaration is completed the Guardian Council will examine the qualifications of the candidates and will give the names of the qualified ones to the Interior Ministry.

According to the Islamic Republic's Constitution, the list of those approved by the council will be revealed by the Interior Ministry through the country's mass media.

Gilan Governor General: Azerbaijan Visit Fruitful

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Governor General of northern province of Gilan, Ali Akbar Tahaei, said in Astara, on Friday that his visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan has been successful, IRNA reported.

Upon arrival from Azerbaijan, he said that during his stay in that republic, he discussed with Azeri officials establishment of border markets. The two sides underlined the need to accelerate the construction of Astara border market, Tahaei added.

Iran's private sector will undertake construction of Astara border market, he noted.

Heading a political and economic delegation, Tahaei visited the Republic of Azerbaijan last week.

Devotion to Principle Rare in the West

(An open letter to Tehran Times readers)

It is almost fascinating to watch the latest political show put on by the consortium of Europeans, Israelis and the American ruling class in defense of "human rights," and oh dear God, how sorry we should feel for these crocodile tears!

As though the entire history is forgotten! It was not so long ago when these Germans, drunk with the Adolf Scheckleberger's (Hitler) hallucinations would burn down Jewish homes, drag them to the death camps, and raise hell in the entire continent of Europe; slaughter millions of innocent people around the world and be ruthless enough to declare themselves the so-called "master race," and while the majority of them were destroyed by the very force of hatred which they spread around the world, they are despicable enough to allow the next generation of skin heads and the neo-Nazi to literally burn down innocent Turkish workers who have been allowed in their country to do the dirty works that these "clean master race" find beneath themselves to do.

And it is the mentality of this nation that makes it point a *finger at the nation of Iran that is well known* throughout the 3000 years of history to fight for the rights of the oppressed, the weak and the disenfranchised.

The depth, the breath, and the height of moral decay so prevalent in the West is too great a subject for a short article, but it seems that they need to be reminded again and again that these Western institutions do not hold the moral authority to make any comment or statement on such issues.

Was it not the Americans' secret military and economic aid to the Jewish settlers in Palestine that brought about the illegal creation of the state of Israel by a violent and bloody takeover in which over three million totally innocent people were uprooted from their own ancient homeland and placed in refugee camps that are no different from the Nazi concentration camps and which, after 45 years, still maintain their repusive state?

Life on earth, and humanity itself, is in a serious danger of total annihilation not because of any natural phenomenon or any lack of natural resources for that matter, but rather for the self-centered and self-serving policies of the so-called Western civilization.

With regard to the German inhabitants of this forsaken planet of our who seemingly are amazed at our outrage over their recent legal deliberations, the nature of the case itself notwithstanding, they must realize that they lack credibility in the eyes of the Asians, Africans and Latin Americans.

The people of Asia, Africa and Latin America are too well familiar with the history of the world and know the misdeeds of the Europeans and the Americans in the course of the last 100 years and it is due to this record that not a single statement by these self-proclaimed "civil societies" are ever believed or trusted. Europeans, Americans and their clones, such as Israel, are never ever to be trusted.

Iranians who studied, worked and lived in the West have gathered enough undeniable evidence to convict the West, in general, and its elite ruling class, in particular, of so many horrific crimes in the course of the last hundred years that, should there be a genuinely independent and competent international tribunal to try them, capital punishment for each and every member of the group, as well as total confiscation of their amassed wealth, would be the least of the punishments they deserve.

Unfortunately, no such court exists on this side of the grace and, hence, the "dog eat dog" world of ours which is a living hell for 90 percent of the world's population and an illusive heaven behind the heavily secured electronic gates for the drunk and the hallucinated remains!

In the meantime, it is truly a laughable subject to hear the Europeans and the Americans call the Iranian ruling class "terrorist." This would be equal to Madonna giving modesty lessons to Mother Teresa.

Germany is a nation well known for its despicable racist beliefs; how could such a people have any degree of credibility in the eyes of the Iranians, Turks, Greeks, Egyptians, Brazilians, etc...whom they judge not by content of character but by the color of their skin? How many innocent human beings were murdered by these Germans when they needed an escape goat for their miserable economic status during pre-World War II years?

Can we ask the Dutch government about their deeds in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore? Can we ask the French about their actions in Morocco (Maghreb), Algeria, Guinea, etc.? Can we ask the British about their "glorious" records in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa? Can we ask the Americans about the state of the blacks, Indians, Latin Americans, Filipinos...? And, this is hardly the tip of the iceberg when it comes to European or American conduct in the world! I am sure, we can ask such questions but the answers are too difficult to confess, especially before a generation of people who are so affected by propaganda machines that one wonders if even they themselves believe their own propaganda.

So, the Western inhabitants of this over-polluted earth should stop preaching what they do not believe in or practice. For it is written that "actions speak louder than words." And, as the great prophet Jesus once said, "Physician, heal thyself."

F.T. Khoie

ZANJAN — (April 17): President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjan is seen inaugurating a factory excavating a copper and zinc mine in Argoran, a district of Zanjan Province. Standing on the President's right hand is Iran's Ambassador to Bonn, his excellency Seyed Hussein Musavian.
Photo: Abbas Takin

Israeli, Palestinian, US Security Officials Meet

BAIT-UL-MOQADDAS - Palestinian, Israeli and U.S. Security officials held a meeting in Tel Aviv to discuss joint cooperation, officials said Saturday.

State radio, quoting Israeli security officials, said the Palestinian authority had agreed during the meeting on Friday to re-start full security cooperation with Israel.

But a Palestinian official immediately denied the claim. "Our position has not changed. As we have said umpteen times to the Americans and the Israelis, we will not re-start security cooperation while a solution to the current crisis has not been found," the official, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP.

He said the Palestinian side had agreed only to take part in three-way meetings with U.S. and Israeli officials, and not face-to-face encounters with the Israelis.

"The point of our participation in these meetings is to rebut Israeli allegations that the Palestinian authority does not fight against terrorism and to prove that we are committed to pursuing the peace process," he added.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met Israel's Chief of Staff General Amnon Shahak along with U.S. Middle East trouble-shooter Dennis Ross in Gaza city late Thursday. *(AFP)*

Seminar on Aquatic Animal Nutrition Starts Work

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — A seminar on Nutrition for Aquatic Animals started work yesterday.

The seminar which aims to underscore the significance and role of marine animals in the diet of healthy people is being attended by the Managing Director of the Iran Fisheries Company, M.H Lahijian.

Lahijian, addressing the seminar, said: "Given the rapid population growth, the fisheries company has drawn up policies and programs for improved cultivation of aquatic animals.

North Korea Asks for More Time Before Deciding on Peace Talks

NEW YORK - North Korea has asked for more time to decide whether to accept a U.S.-South Korean offer of peace negotiations to formally end the state of war on the divided Korean peninsula.

U.S. and South Korean officials had hoped for a North Korean response Friday - the three countries are holding preliminary talks to arrange broader negotiations that would include China. But Friday's session was repeatedly postponed at the North Koreans' request.

Finally, U.S. and South Korean officials announced that the meeting had been rescheduled for Saturday. But North Korean officials did not show up for the meeting and instead asked for more consultations at a lower level.

South Korean officials suspected the north was stalling to increase pressure on them and the Americans to provide more food aid to the reclusive communist state.

During Wednesday's opening session, the North Koreans repeated their demand for huge amounts of food aid.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency quoted South Korean diplomat Yoo Myung-Hwan as saying the north had agreed in principle, during Wednesday's session, to attend the negotiations. But the United States and South Korea insisted on an unequivocal statement agreeing to the date and agenda for the negotiations. Otherwise, Yoo said, the north might turn the discussions into a negotiation on food aid.

Last year, President Clinton and South Korean leader Kim Young Sam offered to set up talks to forge a formal peace treaty to replace the 1953 armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War. China also would be invited to attend. North Korea had repeatedly rejected any talks that include South Korea. But in December, the north agreed to discuss the possibility of negotiations. A first round of preliminary talks was held in March. *(AP)*

Int'l Confab on Ancient Metalwork Opens

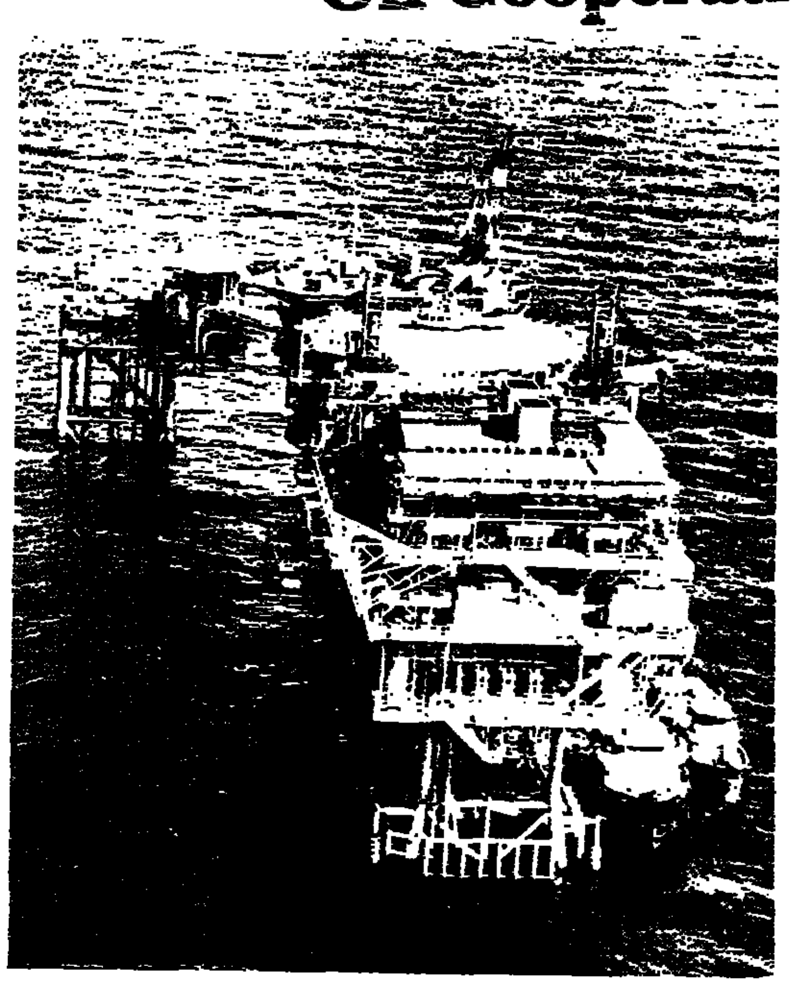
Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The International Conference on Ancient Metalwork in Central and Western Asia opened in Tehran Saturday with participation of eight foreign countries, Director General of Cultural Heritage Organization Serajedin Kazerooni said on Saturday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Kazerooni said that based on research and studies conducted in this regard Iran and some of its neighboring states were the pioneers of metalwork in the world and the traces of this craftsmanship have been found in Central and Western Asia.

The conference is due to last for six days.

Iran, Russia Sign Agreements on Oil Cooperation



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Director for International Affairs announced here yesterday that during the recent visit to Moscow by the Majlis speaker, agreements were signed for cooperation in the oil and gas sectors between the Russian Gazprom Gas Company and the Iranian Oil Ministry.

Hojatollah Ghanimi-Fard added that on the basis of these agreements, Gazprom is to directly invest in development of gas fields, increasing production capacity, refining, liquification and transportation of natural gas as well as appropriate upstream and downstream gas industries in the Persian Gulf.

The two countries are also to launch joint cooperation in other areas of interest, IRNA reported.

He said that during Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri's visit to Moscow last week, a consortium of two Russian oil companies concluded a cooperation agreement with NIOC for drilling in territorial waters of Iran.

So far part of the technical data has been exchanged in this field and the process will be completed by the end of the current month, following which the Russian side will give its response.

The director of the International Affairs of NIOC said that during Nateq Nouri's visit, the third agreement between NIOC and the Oil Company of Tatarstan was also signed.

Under the agreement, the two sides will cooperate in joint projects in upstream and downstream oil industry.

Kazakhstan, Iran to Boost Trade Relations

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Kazakhstan said Saturday it would give a "new impetus" to relations with Iran following a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati.



VELAYATI

"Kazakhstan considers Iran one of its most important regional partners," the Kazakh foreign ministry said in a statement. "We are ready to make every necessary effort to give a new impetus to our relations", AFP reported from Almaty.

Trade between the two countries remains limited, but rose to around 62 million dollars in 1996.

Velayati, who ended the two-day visit Friday, said in an interview broadcast Saturday by Kazakh television that "Kazakhstan and Iran can play a very important role in guaranteeing peace and stability in the region."

Velayati said that he and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev had discussed ways of ending the conflicts in Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

The visit was also aimed at boosting Iranian imports of Kazakh oil.

Kazakhstan has delivered 70,000 tons of crude to Iran since the start of the year. However, supplies were interrupted two weeks ago because Kazakh oil has a very high mercaptan content, which Iranian refineries are not able to process.

Official Kazakh sources said the country was expected to export around six million tons of oil annually to Iran over the next few years.

Velayati also said that "differences will be resolved very quickly" over the legal status of the Caspian Sea, on which both countries border.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran has found itself sharing the Caspian with four countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.



NAZARBAYEV

Kazakhstan is in favor of a division of the sea-bed into national economic exploitation zones. Tehran wants oil reserves to be exploited jointly by companies in which each state has an interest.

Transportation Capacity of Payam Airport to Reach 17,000 Tons

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The capacity of the International Payam Airport, 45 km west of Tehran, to airlift goods will rise to 17,280 tons a month by September this year by using several cargo plans.

Managing Director of the airport Hussein Arzegar added here Saturday that 11,520 tons of the goods are imports and 5,760 tons are those airlifted to various parts of the country, IRNA reported.

At present, he said, the airport has the capacity of transporting 960 tons of goods a month inside and outside the country.

7m Tons of Non-Oil Goods Exported

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Some seven million tons of non-oil goods worth over $3.1 billion were exported from Iran last year, it was announced here on Saturday.

Head of the Export Promotion Center of Iran (EPCI) Ali Saidlu said that the value of exported commodities last year which included industrial, agricultural and cottage products was 1.4 percent higher than that of the previous year, IRNA reported.

"The figure will be close to $five billion, if the hard cash earned from export of technical and engineering services, shipping and aviation services and transit of goods is taken into consideration," the official noted.



SAIDLU

Saturday's Deals at TSE

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - A total of 4,514,841 shares, worth over Rls.5.3 billion, were traded in 1,097 turns, for 537 applicants, at the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), on Saturday.

In Saturday's deals the share prices of 24 companies increased, while those of 30 others declined.

The general price index for Saturday's deals stood at 1939.38 points, down 0.37 point, compared to the figure on Wednesday.

Exports From Central, Isfahan Provinces Listed

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Some 51,974 tons of various kinds of mineral products, worth Rls.14.29 billion, were exported from the Central Province in the past Iranian year, ended March 20, it was announced here Saturday.

Hussein Mohseni, director general of provincial mines and metals organization, told IRNA correspondent yesterday that the figure indicates an increase of over 7,000 tons compared to the preceding year.

He said that ferrous and non-ferrous materials, ornamental stones and travertine were among items exported to Italy, Germany, Japan, the Persian Gulf littoral states and Central Asian republics.

Meanwhile, 104,881 tons of mineral products, worth Rls.52 billion, were also exported from Isfahan, in central Iran, during the same period, Hassan Rahimi, Director General of Isfahan Mines and Metals Department reported yesterday.

He added that the figure shows an increase of 142 percent compared to 1374.

Rahimi further noted that some 240.154 kgs of gold were extracted from Mooteh gold mine in the province last year, indicating a rise of 7.40 percent compared to the preceding year.

Persian Gulf States Seek to Boost Internal Trade

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Officials from six Persian Gulf Arab states will meet this week to discuss how to remove customs barriers and other obstacles blocking trade among them in line with a long-standing economic pact.

The undersecretaries of finance, economy and commerce will meet in Riyadh along with customs chiefs from the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) in a renewed bid to activate internal commercial exchange that has remained a fraction of their total trade, the official Persian Gulf media reported on Saturday, as quoted by AFP.

The April 28-29 meeting will cover a paper by the Riyadh-based PGCC secretariat outlining the obstacles to inter-PGCC trade.

They include customs barriers on foreign products, the wide gap in import duties in member states, disparity in export incentives and port fees, contradictory trade rules, and lengthy administrative measures at border points.

Trade among the PGCC countries, which control nearly 45 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, has steadily declined over the past few years despite steps to faciliate the movement of goods and individuals in line with their 1983 economic accord which calls for a common market.

Official figures showed inter-PGCC trade stood at around 8.5 billion dollars in 1995 compared with their total exchange of 165 billion dollars, accounting for 5.1 percent. This compares with around nine percent in 1990.

"There are several factors that keep internal trade low, including customs and red-tape. But the most important factor is that member states have been slow in implementing the economic pact while some agreements have never been implemented," said a PGCC official, who requested anonymity.

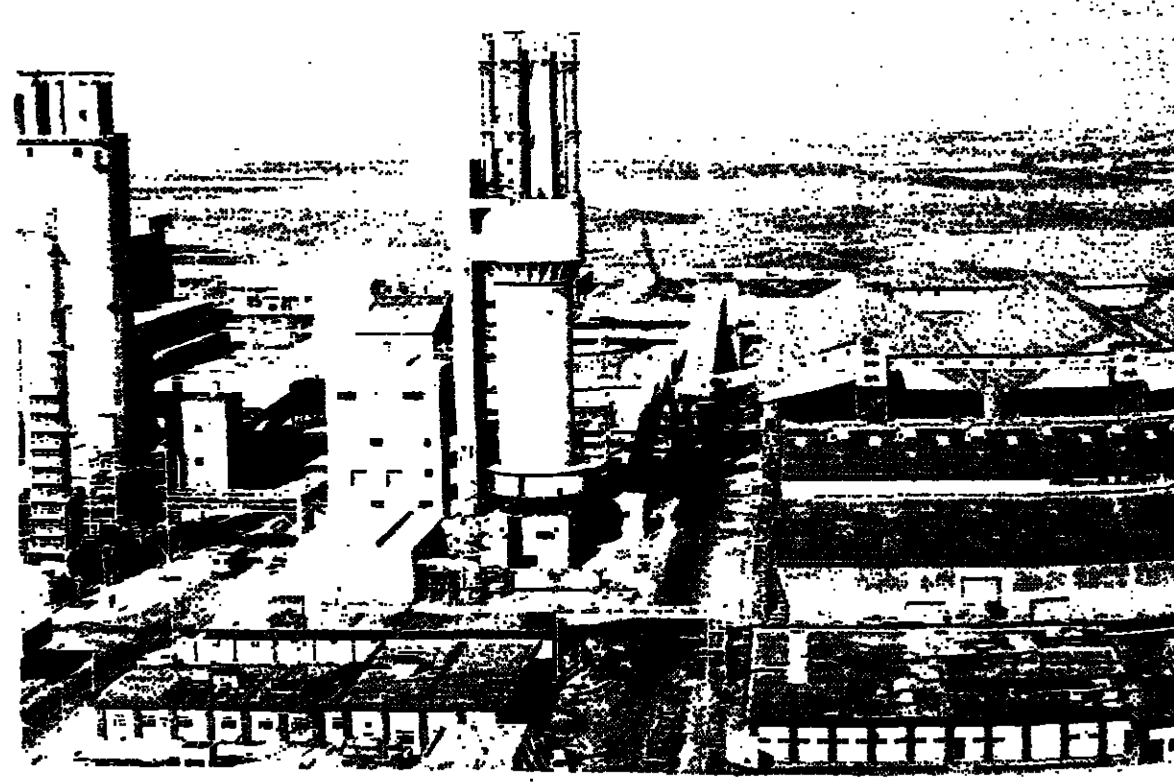
PGCC states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — are still haggling over unifying their customs tariffs on foreign products which vary between four and 25 percent.

The plans have been delayed because of reservations from some members that lowering their duties will hurt their revenues. Others insist on maintaining high tariffs on some products to protect their burgeoning industries.

A single tariff, which will give birth to a customs union, is one of the key demands by the European Union to reach the long-sought free trade agreement that will open European markets up to the Persian Gulf petrochemicals and other products.

"Another hurdle in the flow of trade among PGCC countries is that a large number of truck drivers are foreigners, who have difficulty in obtaining visas to enter other member states," the UAE daily *Al-Bayan* said.

Iran's Cement Output to Rise by 1m Tons



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The first phase of Hormuzgan Cement Plant is to be put into operation by May 21 with a daily output of 3,000 tons.

Managing director of the plant Asghar Rostami said on Friday that the second phase of the project would become operational by March 1998, increasing the production capacity to 6,000 tons a day, IRNA reported.

Rostami said that once the first phase of the complex is complete, country's cement output would rise by one million tons annually.

He said that $100 million plus Rls.235 billion had been allocated for construction of the plant. Rls.215 billion out of the total budget has been spent on the project so far, he added.

He continued that half of the complex's output would be exported.

SPORTS SUMMARY

Tehran Times Service

FOOTBALL

Beckenbauer Furious Over UEFA Climbdown

BONN: German football legend Franz Beckenbauer has warned of a potential split in European football following the decision by UEFA not to back Germany's bid to host the 2006 World Cup.

European football's ruling body on Thursday decided to leave it up to the world body FIFA to choose between bids from England and Germany to stage the event.

The decision was seen as a victory for England, who claimed that UEFA's alleged "gentleman's agreement" to back Germany, which dated back to 1993, was unconstitutional.

But Beckenbauer, vice president of the German bid, stormed: "A gentleman's agreement is a gentleman's agreement.

"It was decided by UEFA's executive that the English would get the 1996 European championship and that Germany would bid alone for the 2006 World Cup."

UEFA had insisted that former English Football Association President Sir Bert Millichip knew about and was party to the 1993 agreement but FA officials deny they were ever informed of such a deal.

"I can see the danger of Europe being split," Beckenbauer added.

"It would have been sensible to keep football at the center of things and not the statutes."

World Ban for Rothlisberger

ZURICH, Switzerland: Disgraced referee Kurt Rothlisberger has been banned worldwide after world football's ruling body FIFA on Friday adopted the life-ban dished out to the former Swiss official by its European counterpart UEFA last month.

Rothlisberger was handed a life ban by UEFA on March 27 after it found him guilty of trying to fix a 1996 European champions league match between French first division side Auxerre and Swiss champions Grasshopper Zurich.

Second Test Confirms Lama Took Cannabis

PARIS: France's international goalkeeper Bernard Lama is facing a two-month ban after the French Football Federation said on Friday that a second analysis of a sample given by the player in February had confirmed the presence of cannabis.

The 34-year-old gave a positive test before France's friendly international against the Netherlands on February 26.

Lama, who is due to keep goal for PSG in their European Cup Winners' Cup semifinal second leg against Liverpool in England next Thursday, had himself requested a second test of his sample, as he is permitted to do so under French rules.

The second analysis took place on Wednesday, confirming the results of the original test.

SWIMMING

Poll and Volker Star in Short Course Championships

GOTHENBURG, Sweden: Costa Rica's Claudia Poll and Germany's Sandra Volker set the standard here on Friday on the second day of the Short Course World Swimming Championships.

Clear favorite poll set a new world record in the 200m freestyle final, clocking 1 min 54.17sec to shatter her own mark of 1 min 55.42sec set on December 1, 1995, at Rio de Janeiro.

And Volker set a new European record in timing 24.62 seconds in the 50-meter freestyle heat, breaking her old record of 24.67 seconds set in December last year at Rostock, Germany.

Poll dominated her race to oust China's Nian Yin, second in 1min 56.24sec and Slovakia's Martina Moravcova was third in 1min 56.66.

Sprint Queen Volker was not totally happy with her showing as she clocked 24.70 in the final ahead of Jennifer Thompson (USA), who timed 24.78, and Le Jingyi of China, who finished in 24.83.

TABLE TENNIS

Jing Sets Sights on More Gold

GLASGOW: Jing Jun-Hong, the China-born Singaporean whose three wins on Thursday led her country to its first Commonwealth gold medal with a 4-2 win over England in the women's team event, continued her winning ways on Friday in a bid to collect four golds.

This has not been achieved since the China-born Canadian Johnny Huang did it three years ago in Hyderabad, India, but Jing's progress to two semifinals suggested she is well capable of emulating him.

Parma Ready to Take the Strain

MILAN — Parma face the side who reopened the Italian league championship for them last weekend when they host Udinese today.

The biggest favor Parma have received all season came when Udinese stunned Juventus with a 3-0 victory before the Turin faithful last Sunday.

Now Parma will be asking for another favor this weekend — all three points from a match that should seem them keep the pressure on Juventus at the top of the Serie A.

Two men have been key to Parma's recent success, French defender Lilian Thuram, rated the best player in the Serie A by the influential *Gazzetta dello Sport* newspaper, and Argentine striker Hernan Crespo.

Crespo, one of the stars of last year's Olympic soccer tournament, has now scored six goals in his last six matches.

"Juventus have been together for longer and have had more experience of big matches than we have," Crespo said. "But we are aware of our strengths and we've a good understanding on the pitch."

Udinese will be looking to German ace Oliver Bierhoff, scorer of the two goals that saw off the Czech Republic in the European championship final last year, and new hero Marcio Amoroso, who scored two of the goals against Juventus. The 22-year-old Brazilian signed a new contract this week, taking him through to 2002.

AC Milan, who have scored two goals but conceded nine in their last two matches against Juventus and Inter, have a game against Piacenza that will carry plenty of bad memories.

It was a 3-2 defeat to Piacenza earlier in the season which cost Oscar Tabarez his job as coach and saw Arrigo Sacchi drafted in from the Italian national team. If anything, though, the situation has only got worse.

Piacenza are meanwhile precariously close to the relegation zone, and will not surrender without a fight at the San Siro. (AFP)

Nice Look For Face-Saving Place in Final

PARIS — Nice, doomed to relegation from the first division, will be looking to salvage some pride with a place in the French cup final when they take on second division side Laval on Sunday.

Veteran Nice defender Jean-Philippe Mattio said a final berth provided the Cote d'Azur club with the opportunity to save a very difficult year.

The cup is a chance we've been offered and we must give it all at Laval to reach the final, he said.

Laval, semifinalists in 1993, are aiming to become the second successive side outside the top flight to reach the final after third division Nimes's stunning run last season.

Nice, in their eighth semifinal, won the cup twice in three seasons during their glory years in the 1950s when they also lifted the first division championship four times. They completed the double in 1952.

This season the club has only four wins in 33 league matches and sit at the bottom of the table.

Nice also want to take revenge over Laval, said midfielder Thierry de Neef. We haven't forgotten that they eliminated us from the French cup at home in the Stade du Ray last year.

Assistant coach Jacky Desmenez said his side would not be taking anything for granted against a second division outfit that put runaway first division leaders Monaco out in the first round.

I know that with the support of their fans they're going to raise their level and I know how difficult it's going to be to play there, he said.

Nice will be without their most effective forward, Liberian James Debbah, who hurt his eye in the quarterfinal at fourth division Clermont last month.

That will be a serious handicap, he's one of our important assets in attack, De Neef said.

But Mohammed Chaouch is in good form and scored against Cannes and Lens (in Nice's last two league games).

Injured defender Youssef Salimi and Serbian midfielder Zoran Milinkovic are also doubtful. (Reuter)

Ravanelli Back for Italy Against Poland

ROME — Italy will announce their squad on Monday for an April 30 World Cup qualifier against Poland but Middlesbrough striker Fabrizio Ravanelli can be sure of being called up after missing the last two games.

The Italian federation said in a statement that it would announce the squad on Monday morning.

In the same statement it then also announced that the player Fabrizio Ravanelli will arrive at the training camp on Saturday the 26th.

Cesare Maldini's squad is also sure to include fellow overseas stars Gianfranco Zola and Roberto di Matteo who play in England with Chelsea.

Ravanelli missed the last two internationals against Moldova and Poland, the latter a 0-0 draw, due to a muscle strain.

He will be a late arrival at the Italy camp due to Middlesbrough's English FA Cup semifinal replay against third division Chesterfield on April 22 and a Premier League game away to Tottenham on April 24.

The Italian federation said Juventus players would join the squad on April 24, a day after their European Cup semifinal second leg against Ajax Amsterdam. (Reuter)

Russia's Kasparov Says He Ready to Play Karpov

MOSCOW — Professional Chess Association (PCA) champion Garry Kasparov said on Friday he was ready to play Russian archrival Anatoly Karpov, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

But his comments, at a congress of Russian chess players in Moscow, indicated the prize money still had to be agreed before the long-awaited match could go ahead with Karpov, champion of the rival International Chess Federation (FIDE).

Karpov has a legitimate right to play me, TASS quoted Kasparov as saying. Everything was agreed long ago except for the prize money.

Kasparov said he believed Russia's Vladimir Kramnik and India's Viswanathan Anand, whom he beat to retain his PCA title in 1995, also had the right to challenge him.

The chess world has been split since Kasparov, the Russian grandmaster, and fellow 1993 world championship finalist Nigel Short of England broke away from FIDE, the game's governing body, to form the PCA.

Karpov remained with the FIDE and regained its crown last year.

Fide has designed a new format for its world championship, a tournament of 100 players starting next December in Elista, capital of the former Soviet Republic of Kalmykia.

FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov has invited Kasparov and Karpov to take part in the championship and said they can join at the semifinal stage. It is not yet clear if they will attend.

A Russian Chess Federation official, who declined to be named, told Reuters that any match between the two grandmasters would depend on a prior agreement on the prize money and was likely to be outside the auspices of the PCA and FIDE.

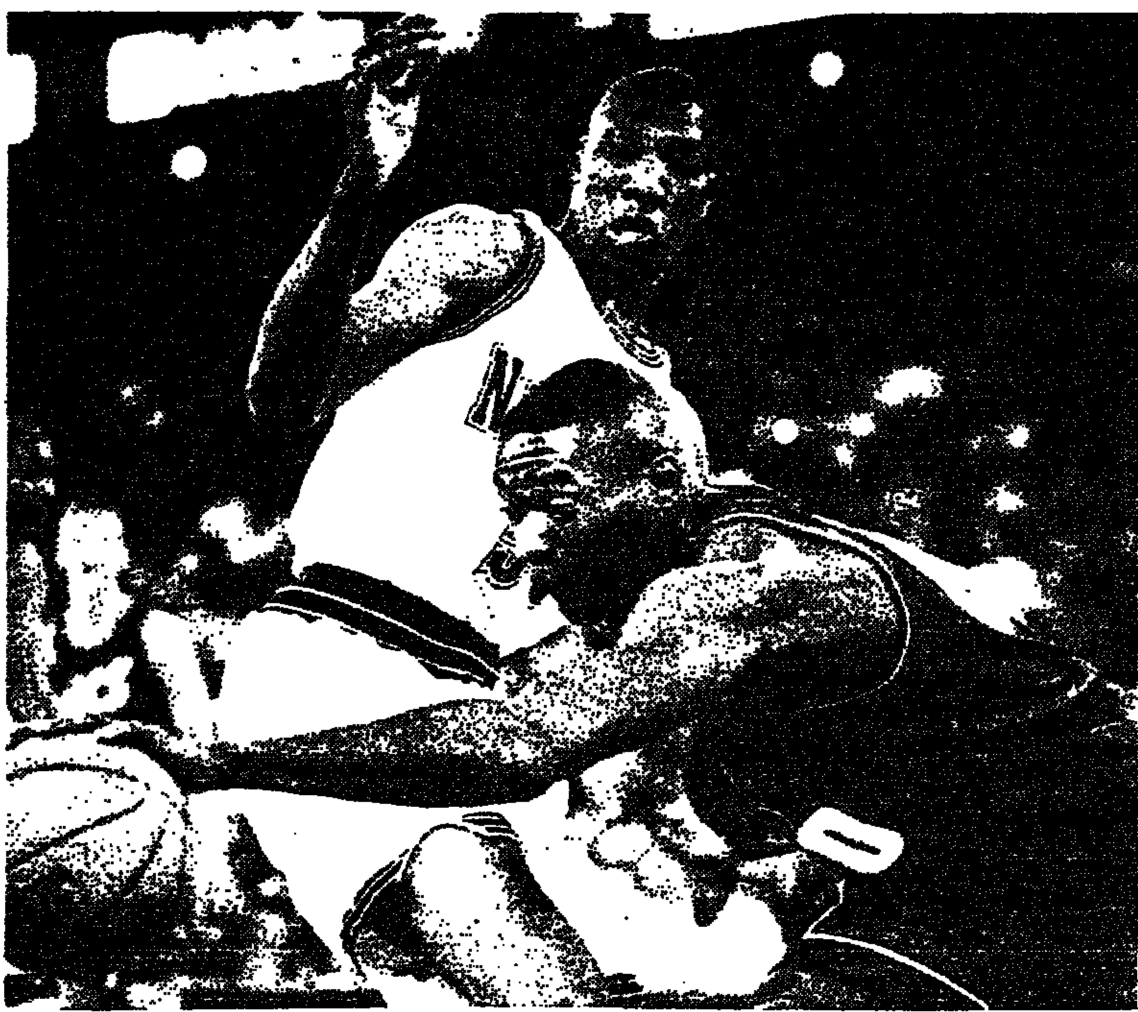
If it takes place, the match will be played outside FIDE and the PCA, and will be organized privately and unofficially. (Reuter)

National Wrestling Team Ranks First

TEHRAN — Iran's national wrestling team, by bagging five gold and two bronze medals, ranked first at the 12th round of Asian Freestyle Wrestling Competitions which opened here on Wednesday.

Scoring 70 points, the Iranian team took the first place followed by South Korea and Japan with 65 and 40 points, respectively.

45 wrestlers from Iran, Japan, China, South Korea and North Korea, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan competed in the contest. (IRNA)



DENVER, CO, United States (April 17): Seattle Supersonics Shawn Kemp (front) lunges for a loose ball as Denver Nuggets Ervin Johnson watches during first period play of their game at McNichols Sports Arena in Denver. (AFP PHOTO)

Arafat Accuses U.S. of Failing to Put Pressure on Israel

BONN — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has accused the United States of failing to put pressure on Israel to push forward the Middle East peace process.

"The United States would seem to be in a position to put pressure on Israel, but they are not doing so," he said in an interview with the German weekly magazine *Focus*, to appear Monday.

"On the contrary, in the space of 10 days, they have given spectacular support to Israeli policy, by preventing — through their veto — the (UN) Security Council condemning the construction of the Har Homa settlement in East Bait-ul-Moqaddas," he said.

Arafat accused Israel of driving "the entire region into catastrophe" and he refused to rule out the possibility of a new war in the Middle East.

He said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was "quite simply ignoring" his country's undertakings under the Oslo peace accords.

Arafat said he no longer believed that Netanyahu wanted peace.

"These last few days, he has made it clear publicly that he is opposed to the Oslo accords," he said.

Arafat reiterated an appeal to Germany and other European countries to play a "much more active role" in the peace process.

(AFP)

Molotov Cocktail Hurled at Iranian Consulate in Paris

PARIS — A petrol bomb was thrown at Iran's consulate here, on Friday.

The attack left no damage to life or property.

The assailant who is said to be an Iranian was reportedly arrested by French police minutes after the attack.

Meanwhile a French Foreign Ministry spokesman said he knew nothing about the incident but noted that generally "France condemns any attack" against diplomatic missions on its soil.

(IRNA)

Kurdish Factions Agree to Free Captives

WASHINGTON — Rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq agreed to release 131 prisoners at a meeting in Turkey this week, the U.S. State Department said on Friday.

Spokesman Nicholas Burns said that at Wednesday's meeting in Ankara, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) agreed to release 61 detainees from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), while the PUK agreed to free 70 KDP detainees.

The agreement came at a regular meeting of the so-called Supervisory Peace Monitoring Group, which includes U.S., British and Turkish officials.

Points at issue between the two groups include sharing of oil trade revenues on the Turkish border and the status of the city of Arbil.

(Reuter)

Opponent of Saddam Hussein Held at London's Heathrow Airport

LONDON — The government says it is holding an opponent of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in detention at London's Heathrow Airport while it considers his application for political asylum.

The man, Mashaan al-Jabouri, is leader of the Damascus-based Iraqi Homeland Party which seeks Saddam's ouster.

The party in a statement in the Syrian capital Thursday expressed concern over Al-Jabouri's detention at Heathrow. He has been held by immigration authorities since he arrived there Monday from Syria. He has applied for political asylum in Britain.

(AP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

GOVERNING...

It will be the third government India has had since elections last year left no party with a clear parliamentary majority. The hung Parliament has been a stage for constant jockeying that is unlikely to end with Gujral's appointment.

In recent days, the leaders of several parties in the 13-member coalition had laid claim to the prime minister's post in a power struggle that some feared would destroy the Front.

There were also worries that the squabbling would destroy earlier consensus on budget proposals business leaders had hailed as growth- and investor-friendly. Sharma had told leaders to end the political uncertainty before Parliament reconvenes on Monday to consider the budget.

Gujral had long been considered a front-runner for prime minister because of his popularity among a range of centrist and leftist parties. He is a member of the Janata Dal, a leftist party that is the main bloc in United Front, and was once a member of the powerful Congress Party.

(AP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

PRESIDENT...

creased up to 60,000 tons of zinc per year in a short period. The units are also able to meet the country's demands for zinc in agricultural, industrial, electronic, car manufacturing, food and health sectors.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the Angooran zinc bar manufacturing unit, the president said that it is a source of pride for the country that its experts have obtained the technical knowledge and expertise for zinc production.

"The implementation of such a great project will turn Iran into a major zinc producer and exporter in the world," he emphasized. President Rafsanjani noted that Iran is very rich in zinc and that the value of Angooran zinc mine, 120 kilometers southwest of Zanjan and one of the biggest mines in the Middle East, amounts to more than $7 billion. During the ceremony, President Rafsanjani awarded Ali Kolahdooz, deputy minister of mines and metals for handling the mines a plaque of honor.

The Angooran zinc bar manufacturing unit has been set up in an area of 12,000 sqm and some 23 billion rials and $750,000 has so far been spent on construction of the unit.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Mines and Metals Hussein Mahlooji said at the ceremony that the Angooran zinc bar manufacturing unit will not only meet all the demands for zinc in the country, but that Iran will also begin to export zinc by next year. The construction of another zinc manufacturing unit in Dandi, 90 kilometers southwest of Zanjan, a textile factory and the Mahanshan Bridge were also started in the presence of the president.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

NETANYAHU'S...

series of legal and political challenges to his leadership over the unprecedented corruption scandal.

Opposition Labour MPs have said they will appeal to the Supreme Court to overturn Arbel's decision if she does not press charges against Netanyahu.

The court has ruled in the past that there should be no hesitation in bringing public figures to trial even if evidence is limited, so that Israelis "do not get the impression that there is one law for one and another for others" in the words of former presiding Judge Meri Shamgar.

Netanyahu, who has said he will not step down over the scandal, also faces a threat from within his own right-wing coalition, which has a majority of only six in the 120-seat Parliament.

Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said his centrist Third Way Party, which has four seats, may bail out of the coalition if the state prosecutor's report "turns up very serious facts."

Another of Netanyahu's allies, the Russian Immigrant Party Israel B'Alya, which has seven seats, says it will decide what action to take after the state prosecutor's announcement.

Even within his own Likud Party, Netanyahu's support appears to be dissolving.

Communications Minister Limor Livnat and Finance Minister Dan Meridor have refused to publicly back the prime minister and may be on the point of resigning.

"It is at difficult times that you find out who your true friends are," Netanyahu told Likud Party workers in Tel Aviv last week.

(AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

U.S. ...

Asked about the nature of the meetings, he said they would be "normal consultations."

"We are in touch with the Russian Federation continually," he said, adding that negotiations on the subject had not been concluded.

"We were very pleased yesterday to see that President (Boris) Yeltsin seemed hopeful about the conclusion of those talks," Burns said. "We are not there yet."

The White House on Thursday cast doubts on the signing of the accord in Paris May 27 as announced by Yeltsin.

"The venue has not been determined nor the date because among other things the charter itself has not been finished," White House Spokesman Michael McCurry said.

(AFP)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

IRGC...

The U.S.-based *Washington Post*, in an article published last week, claimed that a high-ranking IRGC personnel had established relations with the Saudi national accused of the crime.

Major General Rezaei stressed that this is not the first time the United States has levelled lies against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He added that the U.S. media and officials, along with their dummy, the Zionist regime, spare no effort at embarrassing the Islamic Republic of Iran with hostile accusations that are unsupported by documentary evidence, not to say "proof beyond reasonable doubt."

(Contd From Pg. 1)

IRAN...

The envoys of Australia and New Zealand, as well as those from European Union countries with the exception of Greece were recalled from Tehran following the ruling of the Berlin Court against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman added that by sending their envoys back, Australia and New Zealand have demonstrated a clear distinction between their own interests and the rumors and plots by Israel and America.

According to instructions by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Foreign Ministry has been ordered to monitor closely the attitudes of foreign governments following the politically-motivated verdict issued by the court in Berlin, Mohammadi said.

The Foreign Ministry will keep in mind the steps taken by Australia and New Zealand, he said, assessing the move as a positive development.

He added, "naturally, we can increase our ties with those countries which follow the principles of mutual respect and trust in their relations with Iran."

(Contd From Pg. 1)

BERLIN...

"How do those who claim to defend human rights dare to insult the sacred values of other nations?" he asked.

First, he cited the strong points of the Islamic Republic as one of the most stable countries in the region, saying it has clear goals and obeys its Islamic Leader.

"Such malicious plots will never deviate Muslims from the path of independence which they have opted to pursue," Najafabadi said.

Secondly, he said the enemies should be aware of the fact that such biased propaganda will not serve to weaken the people's unity.

He expressed the hope that German political leaders and authorities would act more cautiously in the near future and not allow themselves to be influenced by propaganda, media frenzy and Satanic influences leading to prejudgments.

He warned that if the case is intended for political revenge and confrontation, it would have unfavorable effects on both nations and political relations will be hurt by those who stand to gain. Considering the good relations which, until the current controversy, characterized Iran and European Union (EU) member countries, Najafabadi pointed to the fact that in spite of U.S. sanctions imposed against Iran its political and economic relations with European countries improved.

"That fact led the U.S. and the Zionist regimes to fabricate new plots against the Islamic nation, relying on their main accusation that the Islamic Republic is a corrupt regime and sponsor of terrorism," Najafabadi stressed.

"We are looking forward to witnessing events that will reveal such plots and the true intentions of anti-revolutionary and Zionist elements who are trying to cover up new issues such as the increase in Jewish settlements in East Bait-ul Moqaddas, the increased oppression of the Lebanese people and the recent murder of Palestinians in occupied lands," he told the *Tehran Times*.

The enemies, he said, only strengthen the Iranian nation's resolve to counter such plots and to defend its spiritual and religious values.

"Iranians won't let others play with their fates. It has been our experience that each ploy employed by the enemy to weaken the nation only serves to teach a lesson to Satanic agents," Najafabadi concluded.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

SENIOR...

guard their Islamic homeland," he reiterated.

He added that in the current year, based on the guidelines of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, due attention has been paid to logistics and training of personnel and more progress is expected in the near future.

"The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the army, enjoy complete readiness and will never allow the enemy to make any aggression against their homeland. Thus, whoever dares to confront our army will become deeply remorseful," Rostami stressed.

General Ataollah Salehi, 49, pointing at the divine objectives sought by the Iranian army, said that, today, the army is serving the interests of the Muslims.

"Under the former regime, the army was commanded by the hirelings of the global arrogance and was utterly controlled by the big powers. The foreign advisors had penetrated all divisions of the army and had full control over all ranks, trying to make the Iranian personnel believe that without them, the Iranian army will fall into disorder. But today, in the absence of the foreign advisors, the army personnel are performing their tasks efficiently and the army has grown much stronger than before," he noted.

Salehi went on to say that on April 18, 1979, a short while after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the army personnel marched through the streets and displayed their great combat and defense abilities.

The late Leader of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini in 1979 named April 18 the 'Army Day' to mark the sacrifices of the army personnel.

Regarding the plans of the army for self-sufficiency to be carried out this year, General Rostami said that the plans are mostly related to improving the tanks and personnel carriers. He stressed that the spare parts are no longer imported and are all manufactured in Iran.

General Barati, speaking about the country's defense budget, said that after the end of the imposed war, the government officials have been trying to reduce the defense budget year by year. That is why, he added, the defense budget is allocated only for the necessities such as new equipment and maintenance and overhaul and not for purchase of weapons.

"After the war, efforts have been made to achieve self-sufficiency in the manufacture of tanks and airplanes," he added.

On the status of the Iranian army at the regional and international levels, Barati said that the neighboring countries and those in the Eastern Europe hold a very appropriate attitude toward the Iranian army and describe it as efficient and having great knowledge and expertise.

He added, "Turkey is a country neighboring on Iran. It has an army which is totally dependent on the U.S. and which is by no means self-reliant. But in contrast, the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran is known not only in the Middle East but in the whole world for its advanced parameters, a fact acknowledged by the world's senior military officers."

Elaborating on the merits of the Iranian army, General Salehi said, "The personnel's potential, advanced and modern equipment and military training are considered as determining factors in evaluating the capability of the armies in the world." Although the arrogant powers are ahead of us regarding some of these parameters, they feel worried by the strength of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He added, "What distinguishes the Iranian army from other armies is the faith and self-reliance of its personnel and commanders. The American army is rigged with the most sophisticated arms and equipment but is lacking in faith and self-confidence."

Salehi went on to say that the other armies in the region are suffering from the same problem that the Iranian army did before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, namely the presence of foreign advisors. "The outcome is the lack of trust in the national efficiency, which in turn reduces the capability of those armies," he pointed out.

In conclusion, he said, "Considering the main features of the Iranian army which are belief in the national ability, faith in the Almighty God, self-sufficiency and no dependence on the foreign advisors, it is evident that the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the most successful and efficient armies in the world.

(Contd From Pg. 10)

A COMET ......

with those of the Shoemaker-Levy Comet, which crashed into Jupiter in July 1994.

Such a comet colliding with Earth could happen once every 300,000 years, the scientists said.

A 1980 report published in the magazine *Science* stated that a comet 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) in diameter crashed into the Earth 65 million years ago, which is what probably led to the extinction of the dinosaurs.

(AFP)

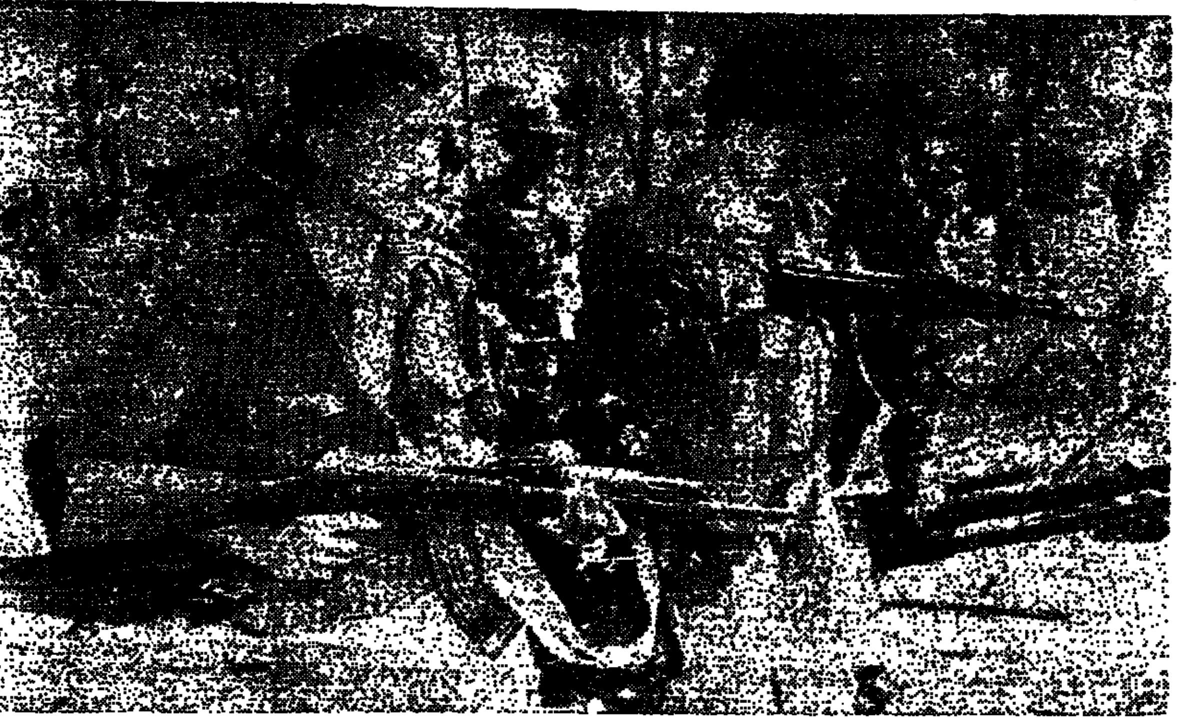


New Political Confrontation May Be Last Straw for Cambodian Government

PHNOM PENH — The latest confrontation between Cam- bodia's two main political parties may be the final straw for the country's already fragile coalition government, diplomats and analysts said Wednesday.

"It's pretty obvious that the last shreds of cooperation between (the two parties) have been blown away," said one Western diplomat.

"It's difficult to see how they will manage as the elections get closer."



On Tuesday, the formerly Communist Cambodian People's Party (CPP) said it supported a call from a dissident member of the royalist Funcinpec Party to sack Funcinpec president and First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Funcinpec Minister of State Ung Phan, a former member of the CPP and close friend of the party's powerful Vice-President Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, accused Prince Ranariddh of incompetence and said the prince was not fit to lead the party or the nation.

It remained unclear how much support Ung Phan, dismissed with invective as a "traitor" Wednesday by Funcinpec radio, had from within his own party, but analysts said that issue was largely irrelevant.

Ung Phan "could be a lone wolf (in Funcinpec), it doesn't matter now that the CPP has come out on his side," said one, noting that tension between the two parties was probably at its highest level since before the campaign for the historic un-brokered elections in 1993.

Funcinpec won that election but was forced into the unusual coalition — led by two prime ministers — after the CPP threatened continued civil war after two years of relative tranquility between the former battlefield enemies, the coalition began to falter when former Foreign Minister and Funcinpec General Secretary Prince Norodom Sirivudh was accused of plotting to assassinate Hun Sen.

Prince Sirivudh, who attempted to return from exile in France on Tuesday but was thwarted in transit in Hong Kong, has maintained his innocence but was convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison in absentia last March.

The biggest piece of evidence against Prince Sirivudh at his trial, deemed by many to have been politically manipulated, was a deposition by Ung Phan in which he said the prince told him he would kill Hun Sen.

Ung Phan's presence in both situations has not gone unnoticed by observers in Phnom Penh who said it was apparent that Hun Sen and the CPP were using him as a tool to divide Funcinpec.

"Given what happened earlier with Sirivudh, this latest (move) should not be a surprise," said an Asian diplomat, noting that Ung Phan's complaints about Prince Ranariddh echoed those expressed by Hun Sen and CPP officials.

Ung Phan accused Prince Ranariddh of fomenting instability by ordering that Funcinpec achieve military parity with the CPP before scheduled national elections in 1998 and threatening to withdraw the party from the government if the CPP did not fully share power at all levels.

He also said that the creation of the Funcinpec-led National United Front — a political alliance expected to contest those elections against the CPP — and wooing of Khmer Rouge guerrillas into the front was a de facto coup d'etat.

Several diplomats said the CPP's quick positive response to all of Ung Phan's points was telling.

Another Asian diplomat said it appeared that the CPP was using the divide and conquer method to eliminate Funcinpec as a serious political challenger.

"This is not unusual politics for the region," the diplomat said. "It does work, but we'll have to wait to see if it works in the Cambodian context." Others were pessimistic about the outcome.

"Don't forget that there's still more than a year to the elections and these people are going to have to prepare for that and attend to business of governing the country," said a long-time analyst.

"I just don't see how they can do that now as one government. I don't think its probable, but there is a potential for anarchy or civil war when you have two irreconcilable factions in charge."

(AFP)

New Dawn in Sino-Russian Ties as Moscow Looks East

MOSCOW — A year after announcing a "strategic partnership for the 21st century," the leaders of Russia and China will sign a key border agreement here next week and discuss ambitious joint projects, as Moscow seeks to forge new bonds with its eastern neighbors.

Russian foreign policy has undergone an eastward shift since former spymaster Yevgeny Primakov, an Eastern expert, was appointed foreign minister in January 1996.

But while it may consolidate the new rapprochement, Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit from Tuesday through April 26 does not herald an alliance to counteract the power of the United States and NATO, Russian analysts said.

Jiang is scheduled to sign an agreement reducing troop deployments along China's border with Russia and the former Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in central Asia.

Jiang and President Boris Yeltsin are also due to sign a joint political declaration on the "multipolar world," setting out their views on the optimum global conditions for their development.

"Russia is looking for strong new partners to maintain a balance of powers in the world," commented Irina Kobrenskaya, a political analyst at the Moscow branch of the Carnegie Endowment, an international think-tank.

The Sino-Russian rapprochement "is not just a response to NATO expansion," she told AFP. "Russia is refocusing its foreign policy on Asia to have room for manoeuvre."

"In Europe, Russia can only seek improved cooperation, but Asia is in a state of flux, and Russia can play a more active role there — for example, in defining new security arrangements," she said.

Leonid Moiseyev, deputy head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's First Asia Department, said the improvement in Sino-Russian ties began with then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to beijing in May 1989, "when NATO expansion was not yet an issue."

He said three major obstacles blocking a normalization of ties had now been largely removed: rivalry over Vietnam and Cambodia, a dispute over border demarcation and a massive concentration of military forces along China's 8,000-kilometer (5,000-mile) border with the former Soviet Union.

"Final border demarcation may be completed this year. At any rate, 80 to 90 percent of the work will definitely be completed," Moiseyev told AFP.

Russia has become China's biggest arms supplier since the two former rivals for leadership of the communist world officially patched up their ideological rift in 1989.

Russia has signed contracts to supply China with 72 Sukhoi Su-27 fighter planes, the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system and two destroyers equipped with missile launchers.

Speaking in Beijing on Tuesday, Russian Defence Minister Igor Rodionov stressed that the arms sales were in line with International Arms Control agreements, and were "not aimed at any third country."

Rodionov said Russia was opposed to Western countries using human rights issues as an excuse to exert influence over China.

Western countries imposed an arms embargo after the Chinese leadership's crackdown on democracy activists in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Moiseyev recalled that the Soviet Union built up China's armed forces in the 1950s, and Moscow and Beijing had a long history of military cooperation.

"In 1992-1994 there was hardly any funding for Russia's military industries. Then China was virtually the only country offering to buy our arms on terms favorable to us, and to some extent Chinese orders kept our military enterprises going," he said.

Last year Sino-Russian trade turnover reached nearly seven billion dollars, but yeltsin has set a target of 20 billion by the year 2000.

Russia is negotiating major energy deals with China, including the construction of a nuclear power station, involvement in the giant three gorges hydroelectric project on the Upper Yangtze River and plans to deliver oil and gas to China by pipeline from largely untapped reserves in Siberia.

The pipeline projects would be too expensive for Russia and China to develop alone, and extra investment would be needed from other countries, Kobrenskaya said.

Border trade is flourishing between Russia and China, but much of it is unregulated and both sides need to boost cooperation to decriminalize it, she added.

(AFP)

India's Ailing Congress Gives Birth to Coalitions

NEW DELHI — India's slowly decaying Congress Party is a training ground where politicians learn the skills to build — and wreck — coalitions.

Former Congress members have shaped the destinies of all of India's coalitions, including Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda's 15-party United Front government which resigned last week after its ally-turned-rival Congress revoked support.

All of India's prime ministers have been either congress members or former members.

Almost all the parties that you see today were once factions of the Congress, said political analyst Ashis Nandy of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies.

It is the only training ground we have for politicians, he added. It is the place where politicians get their only on-the-job training in dealing with political diversity.

On Monday, Congress said it would help to thrust the United Front back into power provided it chose a new leader. The front-runner appeared to be G. K. Moopanar — a former Congress member who defected last year to form the regional Tamil Maanila Congress Party.

Founded 111 years ago by an Englishman, Congress initially drew together disgruntled traders and civil servants who fought against discrimination under British rule.

It later grew into a full-fledged political movement that spearheaded the fight for independence from Britain.

Nandy said Congress had a long history of reconciling differing ideologies.

In India, splits have been significant essentially in the case of the Congress since it was till recently the only coherent political organization, political writer Chandan Mitra wrote recently in the Pioneer newspaper.

Congress strangled Deve Gowda's center-left government by withdrawing its make-or-break support at the end of 10 months.

The inconclusive 1996 polls that put Deve Gowda in power also saw Congress, which has ruled India for all but four years since independence, receive its worst electoral drubbing.

Former Congressmen Inder Kumar Gujral and P. Chidambaram stamped their influence on the Deve Gowda government's achievements during its short term in office.

Foreign Minister Gujral's Tenure saw India sign a landmark water-sharing treaty with Bangladesh and revive peace talks with arch-foe Pakistan.

Harvard-educated Finance Minister Chidambaram drafted the 1997/98 (April-March) budget, which enthused industry so much that saving it has become the litmus test for other political parties' commitment to economic reforms.

Deve Gowda, a southern leader from peasant stock whose earthy style contrasts markedly with that of Gujral or Chidambaram, is also a former congressman.

He participated in the two-year Janata Party experiment which, led by ex-congressman Morarji Desai, set the tone for future coalition governments before it fell apart in 1979.

All four coalition governments since then have been led by ex-congressmen, but none has survived a full term.

(Reuter)

Report Shows 47 U.S. Firms Making Landmines

WASHINGTON — Human Rights Watch published a list on Friday of 47 U.S. companies that it says are involved in the production of antipersonnel landmines, a weapon that kills over 25,000 civilians each year.

The list included General Electric Co. , Alliant Techsystems Inc., Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon Corp.

Human Rights Watch said its report, entitled exposing the source, would be the basis of a stigmatization campaign by over 180 U.S. organizations to pressure the companies to renounce future involvement in the manufacture of mines.

The group said it had corresponded with the companies and 17 had already agreed to renounce any future involvement, including Motorola Inc. And Hughes Aircraft Co. a unit of Hughes Electronics Corp., which is in turn a subsidiary of General Motors Corp.

Seventeen others including Lockheed Martin and Ge had refused to commit to any ban on involvement in production of mines, and 13 companies did not respond to the Human Rights Organization, it said.

U.S. President Bill Clinton has said the United States will lead a global effort to ban antipersonnel mines, but the U.S. government has not yet banned or formally suspended production of these weapons.

Human Rights Watch said U.S. companies made more than four million antipersonnel mines from 1985 through 1996, and that the current U.S. stockpile totals 15 million mines.

U.S. companies should acknowledge the humanitarian crisis created by antipersonnel mines and make the moral decision to get out of the business now, said Andrew Cooper, Human Rights Watch researcher and author of the report.

The group called on the Clinton administration to declare an immediate ban on production of all types of antipersonnel mines, to release detailed information about its stockpile of mines and to develop a plan for the destruction of all mines.

(Reuter)

Sacrificial Sheep Turns Tables on Executioner

CAIRO — A sheep which refused to be sacrificed for the Muslim feast of Al-Azha sent his executioner plunging to his death from the top of a four-floor building, the government daily Al-Gomhuriya reported Saturday.

The victim, Ragab Mohammad Allam, was one of nine people who died in accidents during celebrations here for Al-Azha, the feast of sacrifice, the daily said.

Allam, from Cairo, was trying to capture the sheep to slaughter it for the feast but the animal ran from him and he lost his balance and fell to his death, the daily said. (AFP)

Australian Man Assaults Police With Garlic

SYDNEY — While not quite a case of assault with a deadly vegetable, an Australian man has been convicted of breathing on a policeman after chewing garlic.

Local media reported on Friday that Jeff Pearce was convicted of assault in a Perth Court after admitting he had deliberately chewed a clove of garlic and then breathed in a policeman's face after being pulled over for a traffic offence.

Perth magistrate Peter Micheledes stressed in convicting Pearce in a Western Australia Court that he did not intend to deter garlic lovers but was applying the law. (Reuter)

Zaire's Mobutu in Peace Move, U.S. Pullout Begins

KINSHASA — Zaire's embattled President Mobutu Sese Seko has agreed to talks with rebels threatening to overrun the capital Kinshasa, the last stronghold of his collapsing army.

In doing so he may be hoping to find a dignified way out of power after ruling the central African nation largely unchallenged for more than three decades. The rebels insist he must surrender power unconditionally.

The United States on Friday ordered dependants of its embassy staff to leave Zaire and strongly urged all Americans in the country to do likewise.

Although the United States military has been prepared for more than three weeks for the possible evacuation of about 450 Americans from Zaire, no order to do so had been issued, U.S. officials said.

However, the U.S. State Department's announcement that it had ordered dependants of U.S. Embassy personnel to leave reflected growing U.S. concern about the situation in Zaire.

Mobutu's security aide, Honore Ngbanda, said on Friday the planned meeting between the president and guerrilla leader Laurent Kabila would focus on transitional arrangements leading to elections. (Reuter)

Indonesian Passenger Aircraft Crashes Off Sumatra

JAKARTA — An Indonesian domestic airliner crashed on an island near southern Sumatra Saturday killing at least 15 people and leaving 31 critically injured, officials said.

The Merpati Nusantara Airline aircraft, which took off from Jakarta, crashed in a coconut plantation six kilometers (3.7 miles) from the end of the northern runway of the Bulu Tumbang Airport on Belitung Island, Merpati said.

The advanced Turbo Prop Aircraft was carrying 48 passengers, including two babies, and a crew of five, a Merpati press release said.

An employee of the Tanjung Pandan State Hospital, around one hour's drive from the crash site, said a total of 46 people had been sent from the crash, 15 of them were dead. The fate of the other two passengers was not known.

The employee, who declined to give his name, said the survivors and the dead victims were all suffering serious burns. (AFP)

Qatari Emir Meets Deposed Father

DUBAI — The Qatari emir met Friday in Paris with his father who he deposed two years ago, the Arab daily *Al-Hayat* said Saturday.

Friday's meeting between the Emir, Sheikh Hamad ibn Khalifa al-Thani, and his father Sheikh Khalifa ibn Hamad al-Thani, came as part of reconciliation efforts launched by the two men in January, the paper said.

The emir's government in February withdrew legal proceedings against the deposed leader which accused him of embezzling state funds.

Sheikh Hamad overturned his father in a bloodless palace coup in 1995. Sheikh Khalifa at first refused to recognize the new government and vowed to win back power. (AFP)

Anti-Communist Alliance Wins in Bulgaria



SOFIA, Bulgaria: (April 18) An elderly woman sells fruit to earn some extra money for a living in a street in Sofia. Since March last year, the price of goods has rocketed by 2,000 percent, according to the Bulgarian statistics institute. Bulgaria's impoverished citizens voted for a new parliament in early elections on April 19.

(AFP PHOTO)

SOFIA — The opposition anti-communist United Democratic Forces alliance has won an absolute majority in Bulgarian general elections yesterday, the independent Darik Radio station reported.

Its report came more than an hour before polling stations closed.

The alliance had been widely expected to win the vote amid huge discontent over economic chaos, exacerbated by widespread corruption and crime, that has left many people living in poverty.

Polling stations opened at 6 a.m. (0300 GMT) and were due to close at 7:00 p.m. (1600 GMT). Some 6.8 million people have the right to vote, and the election was monitored by around 200 foreign observers, including 85 from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Opinion polls indicate the electorate will follow up the street protests that forced the early dissolution of the old leftist-dominated legislature by voting massively for an opposition coalition.

Bulgarians blame the outgoing socialist government for economic chaos, exacerbated by corruption and crime, that has left many people living in extreme poverty.

An opinion poll published Friday by the Sova-5 Institute gave the United Democratic Forces, the coalition led by the main opposition union of democratic forces, 56 percent of the vote. (AFP)

Japanese Nuke Operator Found With More Unreported Radioactive Leaks

TOKYO — Japan's state agency said Saturday there had been seven more unreported radioactive leaks at the Fugen Advanced Thermal Converter Reactor, bringing the number of mishaps to 18 in five years.

The announcement by the Science and Technology Agency is the latest blow to Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corp. (DONEN), a state-run nuclear power operator already under fire for a series of accidents and cover-ups.

"During the inspection that ended today (Saturday), we have found that there were seven additional leaks in two years to March 1994," an agency official said.

But he added that the public should not be "alarmed" by the new findings as the leaks were well below legally permissible levels and could not have caused any health or environmental damage.

The agency has been carrying out the inspection at the Fugen Reactor in Tsuruga, some 350 kilometers (220 miles) west of Tokyo, following a tritium leakage last Monday.

Heavy water leaked at Fugen, boosting the air density of radioactive tritium to 18 times the normal level and exposing 11 workers to low levels of radiation. (AFP)

LEEDS, United Kingdom: (April 18) Crowds gather in Leeds street as police evacuate thousands of workers and shoppers from Leeds city center following a bomb. An explosion early April 18 rocked a railway station in Leeds, northeast England, after a series of IRA-style coded bomb alerts shut down three other stations and sections of a major motorway, paralyzing rush-hour traffic.

(AFP PHOTO)

First Turkish-Cypriot Pilgrims Cross Cyprus "Green Line"

NICOSIA — Some 500 Turkish-Cypriot pilgrims crossed the 23-year-old "green line" dividing Cyprus for the first time on Saturday to worship at religious sites on the other side.

The pilgrims from breakaway northern Cyprus arrived at a checkpoint in the capital Nicosia aboard 10 buses in an operation aimed at overcoming ethnic tensions on the island.

They were met by four elderly Greek-Cypriot women bearing olive branches, with a message attached in Turkish which read "to our Turkish-Cypriot compatriots, let them rejoin us in a united and free country."

"We are not against the (Turkish-Cypriot) citizens, just the (Turkish) army" which has occupied breakaway northern Cyprus since 1974, one of the women said.

The Turkish Cypriots were on their way to the southern town of Larnaca to mark the Muslim feast of Al-Azha (sacrifice) at the Hala Sultan Shrine to an aunt of the Prophet Mohammad (S). (AFP)

N.Korean Defector to Arrive in S.Korea Today

SEOUL — A senior North Korean defector taking refuge in the Philippines is due to arrive in South Korea today, ending his 68-day odyssey, South Korean government sources said.

Hwang Jang-Yop, the most senior Pyongyang official to flee the North, would be flown to South Korea on a special plane, the sources said on Saturday.

You can expect an announcement Sunday morning after Hwang Jang-Yop leaves the Philippines, a government source said. There will, of course, be another announcement after he arrives in our country. (Reuter)

Rift in Cambodian Royalist Party Grows

TAKHMAU, Cambodia — Eleven members of Parliament from Cambodia's Royalist Funcinpec Party joined a rebel move Saturday to oust party leader and co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Their defection was announced in a communique handed out to reporters awaiting the appearance of rival co-premier Hun Sen for a news conference at his heavily-guarded country estate at Takhmau.

The communique, which listed the 11 renegades, said that more members of Parliament were expected to follow suit but it gave no specifics.

Earlier, five senior members, expelled from Funcinpec late Friday after calling for Prince Ranariddh's ouster, announced they had formed an interim leadership committee and would hold a special congress to resolve the situation.

Hun Sen's formerly-communist Cambodian People's Party meanwhile denied angry allegations by Prince Ranariddh that it was trying to engineer a split in royalist ranks and destabilize the already fragile ruling coalition. (AFP)

Italy Says It Still on Course to Meet EMU Targets

MILAN — Italy insisted on Friday it was on course to meet key targets required for membership of a currency union after European Union (EU) forecasters warned that it could fall wide of the mark.

Deputy Prime Minister Walter Veltroni was quoted as saying a mini-budget would do enough to ensure Italy met a public deficit goal of three percent of gross domestic product — a vital target for joining European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

Our commitment from the moment we began working has been to achieve the three percent of deficit to GDP and thus enter Europe. We think the mini-budget is sufficient to meet that objective, Veltroni told Italian news agency ANSA.

Prime Minister Romano Prodi's center-left administration has drawn up a 15.5 trillion lire ($9 billion) supplementary budget in a sustained effort to thrust Italy into the first wave of EMU members in January 1999.

Veltroni made his remarks after EU sources in Brussels said officials at the European Commission were now forecasting that Italy's deficit would hit 3.2% this year, overshooting the target spelt out in the 1991 Maastricht Treaty.

The source said the figure, worked out by officials at a technical level, could be altered before the commission releases its spring forecasts next Wednesday.

Commission forecasters are widely believed to come under pressure from EU member countries when preparing the sensitive forecasts to present them in a flattering light.

The government's latest declaration of intent came at the end of a week of frenzied speculation that France and Germany are cooking up a deal to freeze Italy and Spain out of the EMU's launch.

The EU will decide who makes the grade for monetary union in early 1998. Countries which want to join have to meet key criteria on debt, inflation and budget deficit levels in 1997.

Influential Italian business newspaper Il Sole 24 Ore has reported that Bonn and Paris are working on a plan to keep Italy out of EMU's debut but France, Germany and Italy all denied on Wednesday that any secret deals were afoot to block Italy.

I am sure there is a lot of contingency planning going on among diplomats and may be this is what is surfacing in the media, said Daren Williams, an economist at UBS in London.

But a top Italian civil servant said it was dangerous to suggest all would be lost if Italy joined EMU late. The key thing was for the country to be fully prepared whether it made it on time or not, said Tommaso Padoa Schioppa.

Padoa Schioppa, a former number three at the Central Bank who has taken over as head of stock exchange regulator Consob, said it would be catastrophic if Italy did not reach the three percent target without first having taken steps to stabilize the budget permanently.

But the picture would be different if, having consolidated the process of adjustment for 1998 and following years, we found ourselves at the end of 1997 a few fractions of a point above the three percent, said Padoa Schippa.

This would enable Italy either to join EMU straightaway or to have a date set for entry later on, he said.

What Padoa Schioppa says is the really important thing. I don't think it really matters, except for the careers of a few politicians, if Italy joins in 1999 or in 2001, said Williams.

(Reuter)

U.S. Notes "Disturbing Trends" in Japanese Auto Market

WASHINGTON — The United States said Friday it saw "disturbing trends" this year in efforts to gain access to Japan's auto markets despite progress last year.

More progress is needed in opening dealerships and deregulation of the auto parts market, according to a biannual review of the 1995 U.S.-Japan auto agreement by the Commerce Department and the U.S. trade representative.

The report coincides with complaints from the big three U.S. auto makers that a weak Japanese yen is making U.S. auto exports to Japan more difficult.

It also comes ahead of a visit to Washington next week by Japanese Premier Ryutaro Hashimoto.

"Despite market access gains shown by full-year 1996 data, disturbing trends appeared in the first quarter (of) 1997," said U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky.

Barshefsky reiterated earlier calls from administration officials that the U.S. does not want to see a "significant" increase in the trade surplus with Japanese.

"The overall imbalance in U.S.-Japan auto trade and the first quarter surge in Japanese imports requires that we watch this situation closely," Barshefsky added.

She noted that U.S. officials are disappointed with the slow pace of Japanese deregulation.

"Deregulation efforts have provided very little in the way of meaningful opportunities for U.S. auto parts exporters," Barshefsky said.

William Duncan, general director of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, said however the report "confirms that Japan has met the requirements of the agreement."

Duncan said in a statement the disappointments expressed in the report by U.S. officials "are solely the result of their own unilateral expectations."

"However, it is alarming that the Clinton administration would attempt to further distort the agreement by including within its scope references to auto imports into the U.S. which were not included in either the agreement or the discussions that led to it," he added.

On Friday General Motors officials reiterated their contention that strong intervention by the Bank of Japan was keeping the yen from stabilizing at a "natural" level of about 95 to 105 to the greenback.

The dollar was trading at 125.87 yen in New York Friday.

Andrew Card, president of the American Automobile Manufacturers Association — a group representing Chrysler Corporation, Ford Motor Company and General Motors Corporation — said the weakening yen threatened shatter the 1995 auto pact.

"It is the biggest obstacle to meaningful and measurable progress on bilateral auto trade," Card remarked in a statement.

"Now is the time for Japan to step up to the plate and deregulate, open its market, and move toward domestic demand-led growth."

Earlier this week, chief executives of the big three met privately with Vice President Al Gore to make their case.

According to reports from that meeting, the U.S. carmakers argued that the "artifically low" yen was hampering their bid to sell vehicles in Japan and allowing Japanese companies to lower vehicle prices for American buyers and import cheaper parts for the assembly plants in the United States.

"That gives them (Japanese) a real competitive advantage," said GM spokesman Mike Meyerand. "We argue that is not necessarily fair."

Through March this year, GM, the world's largest carmaker, sold 15,617 U.S.-made Cadillacs and Chevrolets and European-manufactured Opels in Japan, up 26% from the first quarter of 1996.

Meyerand called it "our best quarter in Japan in 80 years," but added that that volume was still far short of GM's ultimate goal of selling 100,000 vehicles in Japan by the year 2000. (AFP)



Zaire Soon Under New Management

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire — The new Zaire is open for business in what promises to be one of the most exciting chapters of African history, says the finance minister of the rebel alliance that controls half the country.

It will be based on openness, honesty, monetary stability, fiscal responsibility and private enterprise actively assisted by clean government, Mwana Nanga Mawampanga said.

All those who want to be part of building this country are welcome to come and join us in the endeavor, he told Reuters.

Chosen as finance minister by the Laurent Kabila's rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), the 45-year-old, U.S.-educated economist is soft-spoken and relaxed but clearly dedicated and proud of his mission.

He dismissed the notion that Kabila, a former Marxist, would create a socialist Zaire if, as looks increasingly likely, the AFDL puts an end to President Mobutu Sese Seko's 32-year reign.

The man is like Ronald Reagan. He knows how to delegate. He knows how to choose his advisers and when he gives you responsibility he trusts you, Mawanpanga said. There's no miracle. You work day in and day out.

My number-one priority will be to restore credibility at the Central Bank. We need the world to understand that we are not going to use the printing press all the time. The second move will be management of taxes. We have to reform the tax system.

Corruption here reached endemic levels. There are a lot of corrupt people but there are a lot of good people. So our challenge will be to find the good people and put them in charge.

Mawanpanga said a third leg of the policy equation would be to ensure that the government used its share of revenues in the most efficient way possible.

I know that the president (Kabila) is a very, very honest man. On that score I can really rely on him to provide the leadership and make sure that the money that belongs to the treasury of this country is not wasted but is used for things like roads and telecommunications, not put in Swiss Bank accounts.

The rebels, who now control half of this sprawling, mineral-rich country as big as Western Europe, will inherit an economy brought literally to its knees by the rampant corruption and mismanagement of the Mobutu government, he said.

We have to show that we have the guts to be able to manage monetary institutions, bring inflation to zero, by having a very tight monetary policy.

We have also to be responsible in managing whatever we get in terms of taxes very efficiently, because there has been so much waste in this country and so much corruption and looting that if we don't change I don't think we'll ever get a second chance in this century, Mawanpanga said.

He said the last estimate he had of inflation was about 1,600 percent per year. Our target should be to bring it down to below 10 percent. That's very difficult. There are a lot of hard decisions to be made. But I think we are prepared to take those decisions.

He also expected he would find a mountain of public debt in the capital Kinshasa.

People run to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) because they cannot discipline themselves. We believe that we can discipline ourselves, put order in our house, and that one way or another the IMF and the Eorld Bank will come knock at our door,

So I will not rush to Washington. I will await them here.

Said Mawanpanga, who predicts he will be Zaire's finance minister before June.

Asked about the social element in the market economy he promises, Mawanpanga said: You can have some social responsibility without being so-called socialist. Having a good social policy can be good business too.

We want business in this country to move at the speed of sound. That is, when people come we have to work as hard as we can so that they can get whatever they want, negotiation, paperwork, as expeditiously as possible, he said.

Gaining the confidence of foreign investors looking sceptically on a revolution did not appear to be a problem.

Mawanpanga said Heineken was so doubtful it had closed its store when the town was taken by AFDL forces. But when they saw we were serious they came back.

We know that if the head is bad, everything goes bad. We know our head is clean so we'll be able to clean the rest of the system. I am confident, he said.

(Reuter)

First Chinese Ship Sails for Taiwan, Opening Direct Links

TAIPEI, Taiwan — A Chinese freighter sailed for a southern Taiwanese port Saturday, the first ship in 48 years to ply the once-banned route and a sign of improved links between the two countries.

The 5,000-ton Sheng Da departed the southern Chinese port of Xiamen on the 16-hour, 270-kilometers (162-mile) voyage for the southern Taiwanese port of Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung harbor officials said.

Taiwanese state TV said the ship left Xiamen early Saturday morning at 0700 a.m. (2300 GMT Friday).

Although the new link is limited, Taiwanese business people widely expect it to be a first step toward better links between Taiwan and China.

Taiwan has banned air, sea and postal links with China since losing the civil war to the communists in 1949, and trade and travel go mainly through the British colony of Hong Kong.

Sheng Da was among five Chinese vessels receiving Taiwan's approval to sail between the southern Chinese ports of Xiamen and Fuzhou and Kaohsiung. China has approved six Taiwan shipping firms to ply the route.

But Taiwan maintains the shipping links do not constitute direct shipping. The vessels must be foreign-registered, and the cargoes delivered are only for transshipment to third countries and cannot enter Taiwanese customs.

China in turn said it will not open up its main ports for the route until Taiwan removes the restrictions.

If this experiment succeeds, Taiwan says, it will consider setting up free trade zones where China trade restrictions will be removed.

Taiwan's Economics Minister Wang Chih-Kang has said Taiwan regarded the Chinese approval as a goodwill gesture coming against a backdrop of nearly two years of strained relations, sparked when President Lee Teng-Hui visited the United States in June 1995.

Taiwan proposed limited shipping links two years ago, but China ignored it in anger over Lee's U.S. visit, which it viewed as an effort to break its diplomatic embargo on the island. (AP)



TAIPEI, Taiwan (April 17): Some 40 Hong Kong and Macau residents hold banners during a protest, demanding that Taiwan government guarantee their working rights after the July 1 Hong Kong handover to China. According to Taiwanese laws, Hong Kong and Macau residents do not have the same working rights as Taiwanese people. They have to work as foreign workers. (AFP PHOTO)

Dormant Volcano — an "Old Lady" Ready to Crumble

TACOMA, Washington — Washington's Mount Rainier, listed as one of the world's 16 most dangerous volcanoes, may suffer a spontaneous collapse with little or no warning, sending massive mudflows cascading through heavily populated lowlands, geologists warn.

Now dormant, the tallest peak in the western Cascade Range at 4,393 meters (14,414 feet) last rumbled in the 1840s, and has for seven years topped a UN-sanctioned list of the world's volcanoes primed to erupt again.

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Because it dominates the heavily populated Seattle-Tacoma area along Washington's Puget Sound, geologists consider it the most hazardous volcano in the United States.

But new evidence on volcanoes now points away from spectacular eruptions like the 1980 Mount St. Helens blast in southern Washington State that decapitated the peak and rained ash around the world.

Even without an eruption, one of Mount Rainier's unstable flanks could give way in a lahar, a fast-flowing river of mud, trees, rocks and water, steamrolling everything in its path.

At least six of these mudflows have reached Puget Sound over the last 5,000 years, said Kevin Scott, a U.S. geological survey researcher. Evidence indicates only one of those was triggered by a volcanic eruption.

Increasing the danger of a massive lahar is the Volcano's advanced age. At about 500,000 years old, it is eroded, over-steepened, and undermined by seeping glacial water, prompting one geologist to call it "an old lady who could fall to pieces" and another to say simply, "the mountain's rotten."

Further, the "old lady" is draped in a shawl of glaciers and snow heavier than that on any other peak in the contiguous United States, according to U.S. geological service files. Gravity alone could drag down one of the highly unstable slopes.

Should that happen, the small city of Orting, 64 kilometers (40 miles) out on Rainier's perimeter, could be buried in a lahar 12 meters (40 feet) deep within one hour.

The town lies in the path taken by the Osceola mudflow, a catastrophic collapse 5-1/2 millenia ago that spilled the top 600 meters (2,000 feet) of rainier down 110 kilometers (70 miles) of River Valley.

Residents there now conduct evacuation drills and stockpile emergency provisions as if preparing for nuclear attack.

Bracing for a sudden lahar is "not an academic subject," Scott said. Twelve years ago, Colombia's Nevada Del Ruiz, a mountain about the size and shape of Rainier, gave way, killing more than 23,000 people.

Even a moderate earthquake could launch another mudflow like the Osceola, he and other scientists believe, coursing over population centers on its way to the shores of Puget Sound.

(AFP)

American Woman Leads Fight to Save Threatened African Monkeys

CALABAR, Nigeria — Liza Gadsby, from Oregon, shares a home with a score of endangered monkeys in the heart of Nigeria, in an effort to save them and their environment.

Gadsby, who arrived in Nigeria in 1988, manages the Drill Rehabilitation and Breeding Center in Calabar, capital of Nigeria's south-eastern Cross River State.

"We are not paid salaries, we live on stipends and allowances and it is the interest in the animals that keeps everybody going."

Her efforts complement those of the European Union, the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and British Overseas Development Administration (ODA), which are funding the Cross River National Park project aimed at protecting the area's animals and the forest in which they live.

Gadsby runs the center with a compatriot, Peter Jenkins, and a dozen mainly local assistants, sharing an area of some 50 square meters (500 square feet) with a score of rare drills, some chimpanzees and an antelope.

"We are not paid salaries, we live on stipends and allowances and it is the interest in the animals that keeps everybody going," she told an AFP correspondent visited the center in the middle of the city.

She cuddled a baby drill affectionately as she talked, and the warmth was clearly returned.

Her charges included animals suffering from disease and another which had been crippled when a vehicle ran over its legs.

The center was surrounded by a high fence, with a retired soldier manning the entrance to the center.

Gadbsy's non-governmental organization, which officially started in 1991, gets financial donations from Nigerians and groups both within and outside the country, she said.

The drills were aged between one and 12 years, one of the assistants, agriculturalist Ikwo Abam said.

But she added that for most of them the chances of reproduction at the center were slim. Brought in as orphans or by people who had owned them since infancy, they had no experience of sex.

"The hope of their mating is very remote", Abam said.

Last November however, 21 of the 46 drills at the center were flown in two batches by a helicopter belonging to a private oil company to the permanent site of Gadsby's organization at Boki in the Afi River Forest Reserve some 300 kilometers (200 miles) from Calabar.

Three of the drills flown to Boki had been born in Cameroon while another was born on Bioko Island in equatorial Guinea.

Two drills smuggled out of Nigeria to the Philippines two years ago are due to be returned to the West African nation within the next few weeks, following approval granted by the authorities in Manila and Abuja.

The center has planned a big reception in Lagos for the drills when they return to the country.

(AFP)

Japanese Media Rapped for Speculations on Princess

TOKYO — Japan's imperial household agency on Friday expressed its displeasure at frenzied local media speculation that Princess Masako is pregnant with an heir to the chrysanthemum throne.

"Such speculations are being spread without any grounds, creating a heated situation," Kiyoshi Furukawa, grand master of the crown prince's household, told a news conference.

"This has become considerable pressure on the princess, and as someone who is assigned to take care of the princess, I feel very sorry," Jiji press quoted Furukawa as saying.

Princess Masako, the 33-year-old wife of crown Prince Naruhito, had been absent from the public eye for two weeks until Tuesday, fuelling speculation by magazines, tabloids and television shows that she may be pregnant.

She did not even attend Emperor Akihito's dinner held in honor of visiting German President Roman Herzog last week. Officially, the princess, who is a former diplomat, was suffering from a fever.

The princess returned to her official duties last Tuesday, attending a funeral ceremony.

The imperial household agency in February denied Japanese press rumors that Princess Masako was expecting.

The agency did confirm that Masako had had to cancel certain public events in December and January because she had not been in "good physical shape" and that she had caught a cold.

However, the same agency waited until Empress Michiko was five months pregnant with Prince Naruhito before announcing that long-awaited news.

Married since 1993, Prince Naruhito, 36, and the princess still have no children and Japanese public is eagerly awaiting for an heir to the throne.

Only a male can ascend to the Japanese throne after revised laws brought in last century. Naruhito's younger brother, Prince Akishino, has had only two girls through his marriage to Princess Kiko.

(AFP)

Boy "Used Red Shorts to Avoid Rail Disaster"

NEW DELHI — A seven-year-old Indian boy is to be honored after preventing a major rail disaster by waving his red shorts to warn a speeding train, the Press Trust of India said Friday.

The news agency said Gauranga Sagar from West Bengal would receive a bravery award from the country's state-run railways and a prize of 2,500 rupees ($71) for stopping the train before it ran off the rails.

Sagar was grazing his father's cows on a field on April 7 when he noticed the railway tracks were damaged. He saw a train coming, stood on the tracks, took off his shorts and waved it to stop the express.

Officials said Sagar's father, a railway employee, had told his son a train could be stopped by waving a red flag.

The Indian rail network is one of the world's oldest and biggest.

(AFP)

11-Year-Old Boy Commits Suicide in Japan

TOKYO — An 11-year-old schoolboy hanged himself late Friday in western Japan, and a 12-year-old girl has fallen into comma following an attempt to leap to her death, police said Saturday.

The boy, whose name has been withheld, committed suicide inside the building of his school at Katsuragi, Wakayama Prefecture, police said.

The police have not suggested a possible motive.

"Investigation is underway, but it is almost certain that he committed suicide," a police spokesman said.

In a separate incident, a 12-year-old girl leapt from the fifth floor of an apartment building in an apparent suicide bid after she was ridiculed by her classmates because of her accent, police said.

The female student at a junior high school in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, western Japan, fractured her skull in the fall and was in a critical condition, police said.

The girl was found lying unconscious in the parking lot of her apartment house and police later found a school bag belonging to her in the hallway of the fifth floor of the building, police said.

Kyodo News, quoting police officials, said the girl, who moved to Sasebo from Tsu, Mie Prefecture, last March, left a five- page note on her desk at home complaining about schoolmates making fun of her accent.

School bullying has been a major social problem in Japan. According to a recent Education Ministry survey, reported cases of bullying in the nation's schools totalled 60,096 in the year to March last year, up 1.6 percent from the previous year. (AFP)

"Bandit Queen" Goes Missing

NEW DELHI — India's former "Bandit Queen" Phoolan Devi, facing charges of murdering 20 men in 1981 in revenge for her rape, has gone missing ahead of her trial, an Indian newspaper reported Saturday.

The *Indian Express* said its attempts to track down Devi, who is now a high-profile member of Parliament, had failed.

She is due in court in the northern city of Kanpur on April 30 after a series of postponed appearances.

The daily, however, quoted Devi's lawyer, Nandlal Jaiswal, as saying: "There is no question of her going into hiding." He said his client had appealed to the Supreme Court to have the charges dropped.

The 35-year-old Devi, elected to Parliament last year from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, faces 55 charges of murder and robbery. She has denied them.

Captured following the alleged killings, she was held in jail for 11 years without trial before being pardoned in 1994.

A recent court hearing, however, overturned the reprieve after the families of the victims demanded a fresh trial.

Last month Devi appealed to the president of India for a pardon.

She had originally been due in court in February but failed to appear. A March court hearing was put off.

Devi, the subject of books and a film, has become a legendary figure.

The police allege that, after accusing two high-caste men of kidnapping and raping her, she led a gang of bandits into the village of Bahmei in February 1981 and gunned down 20 men.

Fergie Built Up Debts "Giving to Charity"

LONDON — Britain's Duchess of York, busy trying to pay off debts that reportedly once topped £3 million ($4.8 million), Friday claimed her financial problems arose because of her habit of "giving the bank's money to charity."

"I don't really like shops. In fact I hate clothes, I'd much rather be in my big baggy jersey and my leggings," Queen Elizabeth's former daughter-in-law was quoted as saying in *OK!* magazine, which makes a point of portraying celebrities in a flattering light.

"The money went on a whole heap of things, like being overly generous and giving the bank's money to charity.

"I was brilliant at giving away the bank's money."

Sarah Ferguson — known round the world as "Fergie" — also said she had started dating and had gone back to live at her former marital home, Sunninghill Park, near Windsor, west of London, purely for financial reasons.

"I couldn't afford to rent any longer. I'm trying to budget and be a 'good girl' financially," the ex-wife of Prince Andrew was quoted as saying.

"I'm concerned people will make out that I am going back to my husband when, quite frankly, I'm not. I think it's very important people realize that I am divorced and single.

"I've been out on a couple of dates."

Fergie, 37, who was interviewed in Verbier, Switzerland, also said she was "the most vilified woman in the world" in the interview.

She estimated it would take another two years to clear all her debts and warned that some of her future money-making ventures may not please everyone.

"I don't want to be commercial, but I have to be. When I was married I built up debts and these have to be dealt with.

"I feel it's time everyone stopped bellyaching and backstabbing. You can dwell on the mistakes I've made in the past, but I'm fighting to give my children the best I possibly can.

"The next year is going to involve a lot of work. I'll be doing things people won't like."

She also implied that she may still be suffering emotional problems.

"I find every day very, very difficult," she said.

Last month Fergie began writing a weekly column for the *New York Times*. She had already signed on as spokeswoman for weight watchers, Ocean Spray Fruit Juice and Olympus cameras.

(AFP)

China's Population Tops 1.22 Billion

BEIJING — China's population grew by 10.42 people per 1,000 last year to 1,223.89 million, the official Xinhua news agency said Friday.

It said quoting the State Statistics Bureau that Tibet "led the country in population growth" with 24.7 people per thousand. The report failed to say how much of the growth in Tibet's numbers was caused by the influx of Han Chinese.

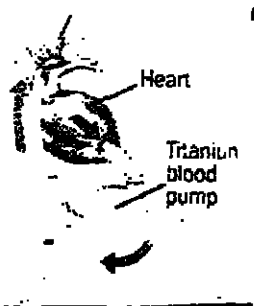
Shanghai, with a growth rate of 5.6 per thousand, was at the bottom of the chart, Xinhua said.

China has followed a strict family planning program over the past two decades, with a much-talked of one-child policy which has been moderated in rural areas where couples are allowed two children in many cases.

Ethnic minority couples are allowed up to three.

(AFP)






Consumers Spot Folly in Fat-Reduced Food

LONDON — Consumers in the developed world are increasingly demanding fat-free foods but are starting to reject these if they don't help people lose weight, experts told a London conference last week.

Michael Lindley, founder of Lintech, a British consultancy on new products, said U.S. buyers were starting to show their disappointment at the tills.

The percentage of customers who report buying reduced-fat or low-fat products dropped almost five percent in 1996 Nabisco's market-leading snackwells brand sales fell by over 30 percent in the first part of 1996, he told the conference, organized by IBC.

This was in part because fat-free does not mean low-calorie, he said — and people noticed when they stepped on the scales.

U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics show that the percentage of Americans who are overweight had risen from 22 to 30 percent, with average weight up five kg (11 pounds).

Products that wanted to make it in the marketplace would have to be tasty, low fat and low-calorie, Lindley said. In a sense, darwinian evolutionary theory will prevail and only the 'fittest' reduced-fat-foods will survive.

Bruce Silverglade, director of legal affairs at the center for science in the public interest, said the 1990 U.S. nutrition labelling and education act, requiring all food products to carry a breakdown of fat, calories and other nutritional information, had helped generate new faith in healthy food.

Silverglade said that despite the evident disappointment of consumers, companies had introduced more than 2,000 new low or reduced-fat products were introduced in 1996.

The demand for lower-fat foods, for example, has led ice cream manufacturers such as Haagen-Dazs and Ben Jerry's to introduce new fat-free products, he said.

Planter's has introduced a new reduced-fat peanut. There are also dozens of low-fat peanut butters, hot dogs, cheeses, cookies and salad dressings now on the market.

He concluded: the implications for food marketers are clear — dietary patterns are changing, consumers around the world are increasingly saying they care about nutrition and they want the food industry to respond to their concerns.

Europe was still a growing market, Lindley said.

The many different fat-reduced snack products in the market today are a powerful testament to consumer demand in Europe for fat-reduced foods, he said.

That could be good news for olestra, Procter Gamble's chemically synthesised fat-replacement product, which has not yet been approved for use in Europe.

It would not be surprising to see olestra-containing products appearing on our supermarket shelves very soon after regulatory approval here, he said.

He said Procter Gamble had re-formulated olestra so it was now partly solid at body temperature — getting around the highly publicised problem of anal leakage'.

Raisio's Benecol, a cholesterol-lowering margarine made from pine sterols, was another possible hit. Now available only in Finland, licenses are being sought for Sweden, elsewhere in Europe and the United States. *(Reuter)*

Woman Rethinks Decision Not to Give Stricken Sister Bone Marrow

LONDON — A woman attacked in the British press for refusing to donate bone marrow to her cancer-stricken sister said Friday she would "think about" undergoing the operation which could save her sister's life, reports said here.

Doctors had reported that Susan Squires, who had refused to helped leukemia sufferer Angela Latham because of her fear of hospitals, was the only possible match for Latham after a search of four million possible marrow donors.

Squire's unwillingness to help her sister, who lives 500 yards (meters) away from her home in the northwest seaside town of Blackpool, led to a raft of outraged press stories Friday.

However Friday Latham's husband, Paul, reported that squires, 39, "had a change of heart" since her story came to national attention and been told the operation could be performed at home, the British National News Agency Press Association said.

"At least now she's thinking about it," he was quoted as saying. *(AFP)*

Study: Less-Educated Have Higher Risk of Anger-Induced Heart Attack

WASHINGTON — People who never graduated from high school have a higher risk of suffering an anger-induced heart attack, according to a study published by the American Medical Association's archives of internal-medicine.

Researchers studying 1,623 heart attack victims discovered that 3.9 percent of patients who never finished high school had been "very angry, furious or enraged" in the two hours before their myocardial infarction.

That compared with 2.2 percent for those with a high-school diploma and 1.7 percent with college degrees.

The risk of heart attack "triggered by isolated episodes of anger declined consistently and significantly with increasing levels of educational attainment," wrote Murray Mittleman of the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center at Harvard University Medical School. *(AFP)*

THOUGHT

The leadership instinct you are born with is the backbone. You develop the funny bone and the wishbone that go with it.

Elaine Agather

PRAYER

Noon	13:03
Evening	20:02
Dawn (tomorrow)	04:45
Sunrise (tomorrow)	06:25

TODAY IN HISTORY

1987 - PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat calls for sovereign Palestinian state "with Bait-ul-Moqaddas as its capital."

1989 - Vietnamese-backed forces pound Khmer Rouge refugee camps near Cambodian border with heavy artillery fire.

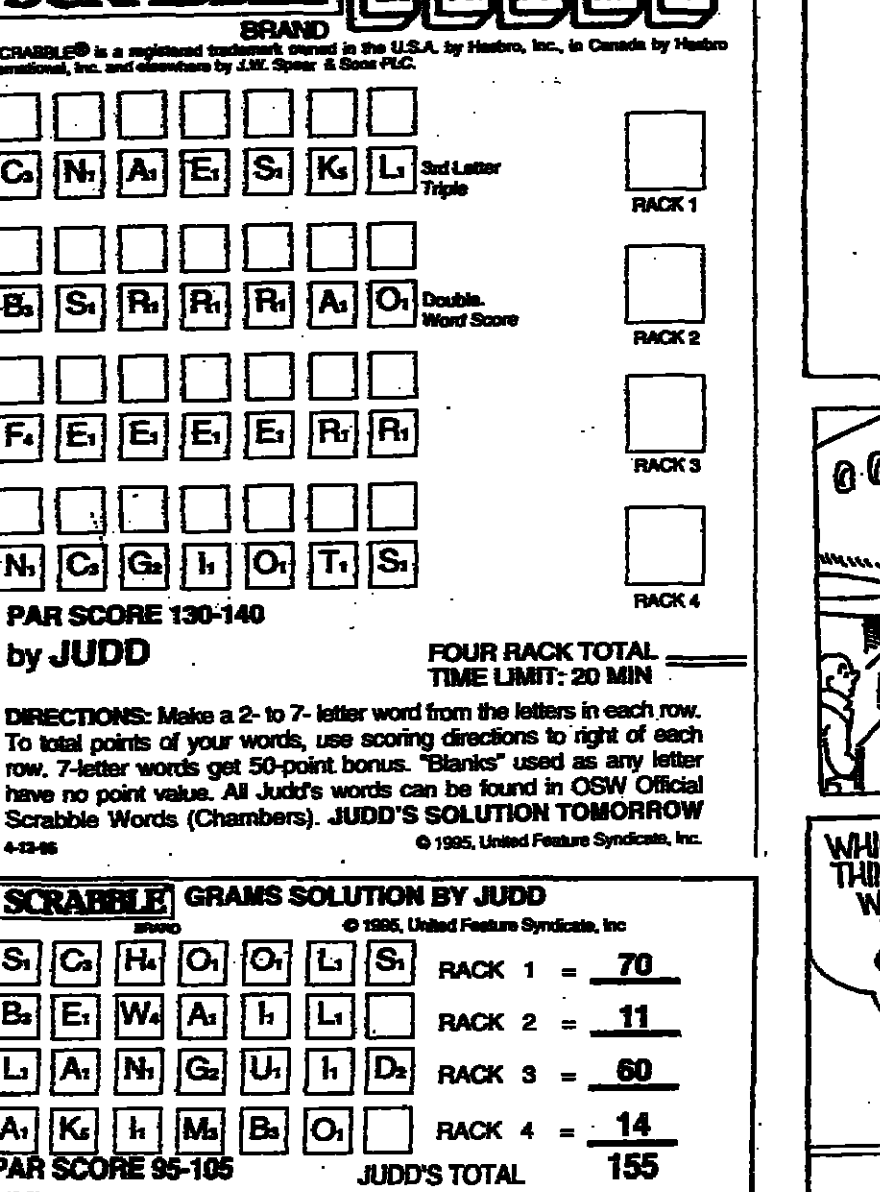
1990 - Lecn Walessa is re-elected as chairman of solidarity by a large margin.

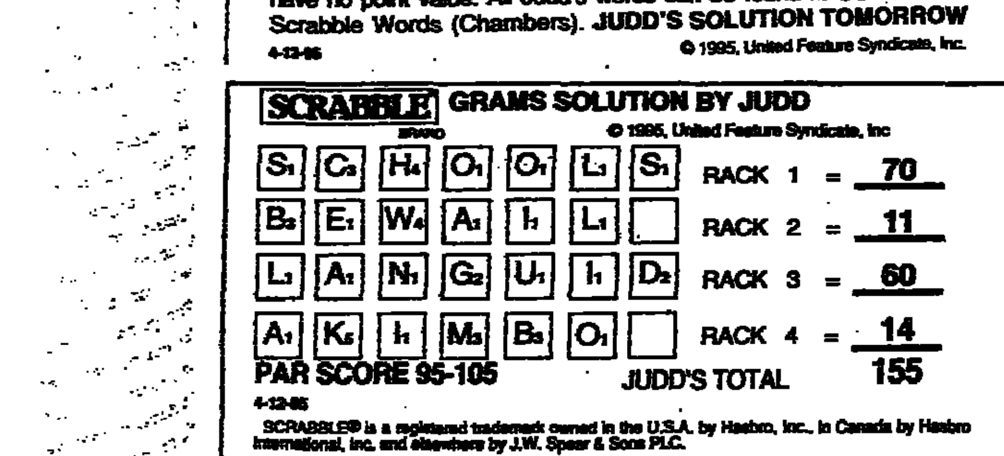
1991 - Sudanese government announces a plan for moving 800,000 displaced people out of Khartoum and back to their home regions in south, west and east of the country.

1992 - Libyan leader Mu'ammar Gadhafi tells foreign journalists to stop reporting from Tripoli.

1993 - Heavy fighting between Croat and Muslim troops spread from central to southwestern Bosnia on the fifth day of combat that has killed more than 200 people.

1994 - Israeli and PLO negotiators wrap up an agreement transferring civilian government powers to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.









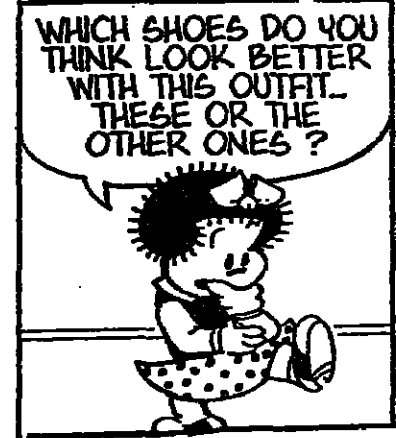
Health Capsules is not intended to be of a diagnostic nature.





"WHY DO I ASK SO MANY QUESTIONS?"

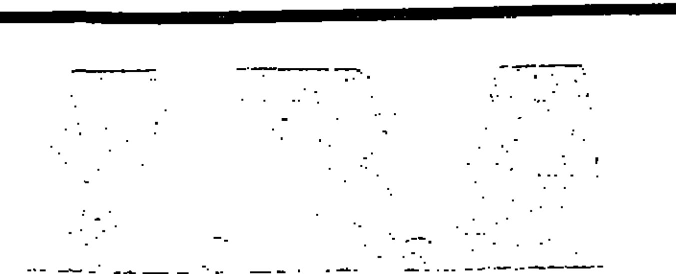




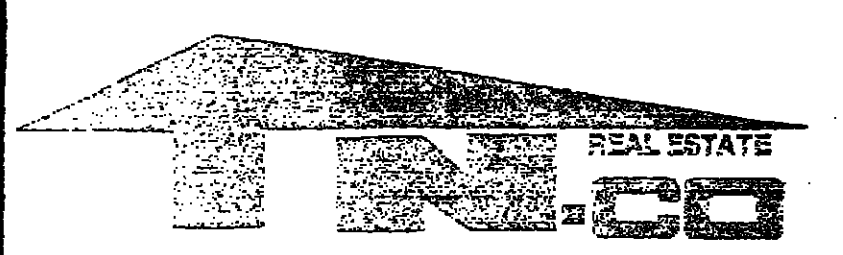






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I. R. of Iran
Ministry of Commerce
Deputy for Exports


Tehran International Trade Fair


Export Promotion Center of Iran

In line with the economic goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Export Promotion Center of Iran (EPCI) is planning to stage the 23rd Tehran International Trade Fair in an attempt to boost non-oil exports, stimulate greater export competition among domestic manufacturers, facilitate the transfer of technology and ultimately to put on view the economic, technical and commercial potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As growing demand for participation in the 23rd Tehran International Trade Fair may result in a shortage of exhibition space, all interested firms and companies are requested to send their application to the EPCI latest by May 12, 1997. After site allocation and other preparations, applicants will be invited to sign fair participation contract. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. For further information you may contact the organizer on telephone number 2191564 and 2191568, Fax: 2042858

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Telephone No.: Fax No.:

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Some 300 Mafia Suspects Arrested in 1996

ROME — Almost 300 dangerous Mafia figures were arrested in Italy in 1996, Interior Minister Giorgio Napolitano said here Friday.

In the past three years, 867 Mafiosi have been arrested in the whole of Italy, the minister told an anti-Mafia parliamentary commission.

Since 1994, Cosa Nostra in Sicily has adopted a much more secretive mode of operation than previously, he added.

The Camorra in the Naples region has become fragmented following the arrest of some leaders, which has led to a series of bloody inter-clan fighting.

The N'Drangheta in the southern Calabria region has developed international links, notably with the underworld in Turkey, Australia, and North and South America, Napolitano said.

(AFP)



France's Chirac Undecided on Early Poll

PARIS — French President Jacques Chirac has still not decided whether to dissolve Parliament and hold early general elections in early June, the authoritative daily *Le Monde* said in an unsourced report.

Chirac, said to be under pressure from Prime Minister Alain Juppe and other key government leaders to bring forward elections from March, will make his decision over the weekend and announce it next week, the newspaper said. (Reuter)

Mideast Crisis Overshadows Euro-Med Cooperation

VALLETTA — The European Union wanted the Malta conference with its Mediterranean partners to deepen ties, but diplomats and analysts say it will be remembered only for a single political gesture.

The second Euro-Med conference which ended on Wednesday after assembling foreign ministers from the 15 EU states and 12 Mediterranean delegations scored a coup by bringing Israeli and Palestinian leaders face-to-face for the first time in weeks.

This overshadowed the so-called Barcelona process, a 6.4 billion program launched in Spain in November 1995 that is supposed to showcase political, economic and cultural links between the two regions.

Maltese Prime Minister Alfred Sant admitted as much in closing remarks to the conference when he added his criticism to the many who had already bemoaned the slow pace of the program.

(The Middle East breakthrough) might have led some to believe that progress in the political and security chapter was overtaking progress in the economic and finance and in the social, cultural and human chapter, he said.

The Malta conference correctly redressed this balance — though unfortunately indirectly by slowing down the first chapter.

Mediterranean countries have criticized the pace of the program in the past, and Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo — who chaired the conference on behalf of the EU's Netherlands presidency — had to endure a string of complaints from his colleagues.



VALLETTA, Malta (April 16): Chiefs of Turkish (L) and Greek delegations at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference shakes hands as Duch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo hugs them in Valletta after the closing ceremony of the two-day conference. (AFP PHOTO)

In the end he resorted to a familiar EU tactic to deflect criticism — blame the European Commission.

Asked what could be done to speed allocation of funds for hundreds of projects from water purification schemes to road-building, he said: really this is a question for the commission and for (European Commissioner Manuel Marin).

But Marin, who has responsibility for the Mediterranean region, resorted to that familiar commission tactic — blame the EU's member states.

He urged the Mediterranean countries to be patient, explaining that although the commission wanted to press ahead with projects, many had to be approved by individual member states before they could proceed.

Marin's spokesman Josep Coll i Carbo was at pains to explain tc journalists during the conference that behind the scenes, work was proceeding on the practical aspects of the partnership.

I know it seems that the whole thing is about the Middle East but look at Jordan, look at Egypt, he told Reuters.

He was refering to Jordan's initialling of an association agreement with the EU that promises lucrative trade and other privileges and discussions with Egypt on a bilateral treaty.

The Barcelona process was conceived to reassure Mediterranean countries that the EU's interests did not lie soley in Eastern Europe, but it is hard to find anyone who believes it has succeeded.

Our partners see how much the EU is investing in Eastern Europe and how much in the Mediterranean and they draw their conclusions, one diplomat said.

But in reality, countries like Poland and Hungary. .. their attractiveness for Europe cannot be compared to Mauritania and Libya.

His choice of the latter two was not arbitrary. Many Arab delegations appealed for Mauritania — which is not in Europe or on the Mediterranean — to be included in Euro-Med, while others said it was time to reassess Libya's political and economic isolation.

Another European diplomat warned, however: If they think things are slow now, wait till they see what happens if this group gets any bigger.

(Reuter)

Gabonese Parliament Extends President's Term

LIBREVEILLE — A joint session of both Houses of the Gabonese Parliament approved a constitutional amendment extending the president's term of office to seven years from five.

The Congress, dominated by President Omar Bongo's Gabonese Democratic Party, also removed a stipulation that candidates for the presidency must be aged under 70.

Bongo, 61, who has ruled Gabon since 1967, faces presidential elections at the end of next year. (AFP)

IRA Bombs and Alerts Snarl Traffic, Unite Labour and Tories

LONDON — A wave of suspected IRA coded bomb alerts and two small explosions wreaked havoc in northern England on Friday, and united the electioneering Conservative and Labour parties in condemning terrorism.

No injuries were reported in the railway station explosions at Leeds and Doncaster, although services through both were shut for hours.

A coded call was received at Leeds but not Doncaster, while coded alerts were made to stations at stoke-on-trent and crewe, which were evacuated.

Similar alerts also forced the shutdown of several sections of the busy M6 motorway in Staffordshire, central England, causing huge traffic jams.

In Liverpool later Friday, police sealed off several streets in the city center after what they described as a security alert, but said there was no suspicious package or warning of any kind.

"Someone just saw something that they were not happy about," said a police spokesman.

Prime Minister John Major, campaigning in Northern England during the day, said the coded warnings "looks very much at the moment as if this is the work of the IRA, showing their usual contempt for people's lives and property."

Labour leader Tony Blair, Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown and Irish Prime Minister John Bruton all condemned the incidents, which appeared to be part of a campaign of Irish Republican Army mischief ahead of May 1 polls.

An IRA bomb alert on April 5 forced postponement of Britain's most famous horse race, the Grand National, near Liverpool.

On April 3, a series of IRA coded alerts forced the shutdown of three major motorways, the M1, M5 and M6, snarling early morning traffic.

On March 26, the IRA detonated two small bombs on the railway line near Wilmslow in Cheshire, shutting down rail traffic but causing no injuries.

And on March 23, an IRA alert forced the evacuation of the same Doncaster rail station targeted Friday.

Authorities speculated it was all part of an IRA campaign to gain attention before the elections and to pressure London to allow its political wing, Sinn Fein, into Belfast peace talks.

Major called on the people of Northern Ireland, where Sinn Fein is putting up candidates for Parliament on May 1, including its President, Gerry Adams, to show "total and utter contempt" for Sinn Fein in the election.

"What we are seeing is that while on the reverse of the coin Sinn Fein seek to contest democratically in the ballot box in Northern Ireland, the IRA are still determined to use violence here on the Mainland in Britain," he said.

"Not in Northern Ireland," said Major, "because they want votes for Sinn Fein — so they will put their bombs and their violence and their planning and sheer nastiness here on the Mainland in Britain during the general election campaign."

"These actions are destructive of the democratic process," said Blair. "The democratic path is there for Sinn Fein to take. Either they take it or be cast out of the process forever."

The IRA, which wants Northern Ireland returned to the Irish Republic, has been waging a campaign of terrorism since breaking off a 17-month cease-fire in February 1996.

Irish Prime Minister John Bruton said: "These antics create the maximum hostility amongst British people towards Irish causes and make for maximum difficulties for both the British and Irish people."

"A vote for Sinn Fein is the same as a vote for the IRA," Bruton added on the eve of Sinn Fein's annual meeting in Monagah, Ireland.

"They are one and the same movement."

In Belfast, Sinn Fein national chairman Mitchell McLaughlin said despite the bombings, his party wanted to see an end to all Northern Ireland-related violence.

"Obviously the details of it are still emerging and it's too early to draw any definitive conclusion, but Sinn Fein's position is quite clear.

"We want to see an end to all such activities, all such activities, whether they come from the IRA, from the loyalists or from the British government's forces," he said. (AFP)

Zaire Rebels May Still See War as Best Option

NAIROBI — South African President Nelson Mandela is banking on a negotiated peace deal for Zaire but for Laurent Kabila's rebels the answer to their war may still lie on the battlefield.

Regional analysts said while Kabila has publicly backed Mandela to mediate a political agreement with President Mobutu Sese Seko, he may be tempted to seek victory by force to stamp his authority quickly on Africa's third-biggest country.

Kabila himself, saying a peace initiative was misunderstood, raised the prospect of a bloody battle for Kinshasa unless Mobutu agreed to surrender fast and hand over power.

UN and Organization of African Unity (OAU) special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun said in Cape Town Mobutu and Kabila would soon meet face-to-face for the first time to discuss transitional arrangements leading up to elections in Zaire.

Sahnoun said Mandela had invited Mobutu to meet Kabila in South Africa as early as possible.

But although Mobutu has grudgingly agreed personally to negotiate an end to Africa's latest war, he has yet to yield to Kabila's key demand that he relinquish power.

On Friday Kabila, an opponent since Mobutu took power in 1965, ruled out protracted talks, saying his forces would march on Kinshasa if Mobutu refused to go.

The South African initiative is about transfer of power.

When he (Mobutu) is ready for this, I shall go and attend a short day's ceremony on the peaceful transfer of power, Kabila told Reuters by telephone from rebel-held Lubumbashi.

There will be no protracted negotiations with Mobutu, never, never. Maybe we have been misunderstood. The issue is about transfer of power otherwise we march on to Kinshasa.

An African ambassador said Mobutu was a proud man highly unlikely to accept voluntarily leaving the presidency he has held for the last 32 years and might have more up his sleeve.

He is counting on prospects for trouble in areas controlled by the rebels and chaos in Kinshasa to trigger an international intervention to forestall ultimate rebel victory, he added.

The United States, France, Belgium and Britain have stationed a total of about 1,500 troops in Brazzaville, the capital of Congo across the river from Kinshasa, but have stressed the troops are only there to evacuate their citizens in case of anarchy breaking out in Zaire's capital.

Some analysts said they feared Mobutu was a virtual prisoner of his Ngbandi tribe from Equateur Province who dominate his Israeli-trained presidential guard of between 6,000 and 10,000 men.

His tribesmen fear wholesale retribution from the rebels and from other tribes oppressed under Mobutu's rule, they said.

He has a hard choice. Departure would mean abandoning his people to an unknown fate and they are constantly reminding him (Mobutu) of what happened to Hutus after (late Rwandan President Juvenal) Habyarimana's death, said an exiled Zairean scholar.

Habyarimana's death in April 1994 triggered the genocide of 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates before Tutsi rebels took power and more than two million Hutus fled into exile for years.

Former Rwandan Hutu troops blamed for the genocide have fought in vain alongside Zairean troops to quell Kabila's revolt and have been driven westwards towards Kinshasa.

(Reuter)

CORRECTION

In our advertisement INVITATION FOR BIDS / TENDER NO. 67001 of KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY on page 9 issued on April 9, 12 and 14 the first sentence should read ... IRON ORE PELLETS FED WITH ... instead of ... IRON ORE PELLETS FILLED WITH ... The mistake is regretted.

EDITOR

New Information Technologies Offer Lifeline to African College

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — Plagued by slim budgets, broke down equipment and out-of-date and looted libraries, African universities may soon receive a lifeline from cyberspace.

Under a pilot project to be launched in April by the World Bank, 10 universities in six nations will be connected through the African Virtual University — a computer link via satellite to universities in Europe and the United States.

The first phase of the project was worked out at a recent workshop in Addis Ababa attended by academics from eight African countries and representatives from universities and donor agencies in the United States and Ireland.

The World Bank says the project's main objective is to tap new information technologies to overcome the many financial and physical barriers that prevent students at African colleges from gaining access to quality higher education.

The bank, which is contributing $1.2 million, says most African universities have become increasingly irrelevant in a rapidly changing world, graduating a disproportionate number of students in the humanities rather than the sciences and engineering.

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Edward Jaycox, a senior adviser to World Bank president James Wolfensohn, said African universities are facing enormous difficulties, including declining budgets, lack of qualified instructors and outdated academic programs that fail to meet local needs.

Making use of computer networks linking Africa to the West, participating universities in the United States and Ireland will provide packaged academic programs, particularly in science, engineering and business.

During the pilot phase, a limited number of first-year undergraduate courses — calculus, differential equations, physics, electronic circuits, statistics, introduction to the Internet and introduction to computer sciences — will be offered via video transmissions, Internet links and other means such as e-mail.

Etienne Baranshamaje, the World Bank's project manager, said the African Virtual University will be a network of Internet facilities and its own Web site.

"In those countries where an Internet service provider exists, a formula for working with them will be sought. Where there is none, AVU will initiate one for the students," he said.

More and more African countries are setting up Internet services. Ethiopia will go online soon through the government telecommunications office, while private concerns provide Internet links in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

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Baranshamaje said that during the first two semesters of the project, there will not be any specific virtual university students. Rather, selected students enrolled in existing university courses will receive instruction and take exams via the new technology.

During this phase of the project, tests and paper-grading will be the responsibility of the participating universities in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Ghana. The lectures will be delivered from universities in the United States and Ireland.

A second phase to begin next January will offer a complete curriculum for full-fledged undergraduate degree programs through the virtual university. If all goes well, African universities also will be originating their own programs in the final phase, Baranshamaje said.

Other universities across Africa are expected to be included at a later stage, Baranshamaje said.

The virtual university is expected to be particularly relevant in African countries like Ethiopia that are emerging from prolonged wars and whose work forces lack vital technical skills.

Governments and private sector organizations in need of continuous professional training for their employees are also expected to benefit.

The University of Massachusetts and the New Jersey Institute of Technology in the United States and University College Galway in Ireland are among the American and Irish institutions participating.

(AP)

Chronology of Mishaps at Japan State Nuclear Firm

TOKYO — The following is a brief chronology of events related to accidents at facilities operated by the state-run Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corp (PNC):

December 8, 1995 — Massive leak of coolant at prototype fast-breeder reactor Monju, located in western Japan. Although there is no radiation leak outside the plant, Monju is shut down and has yet to resume operations.

December 10, 1995 — Initial investigation reveals three tons of the sodium coolant had leaked, pointing to a major accident.

January 13, 1996 — PNC public relations official probing Monju accident commits suicide after revelations that other PNC officials lied about the initial probe and kept secret a videotape of the accident scene.

March 11, 1997 — Fire at the PNC's nuclear fuel reprocessing plant located at Tokaimura, 100 km (65 miles) northeast of Tokyo. PNC reports fire at the nuclear waste treatment facility under control, but explosion nine hours later exposes 37 staff to radiation in Japan's worst nuclear accident. Entire plant, which reprocesses 12 percent of Japan's spent nuclear fuel, is shut down.

March 17, 1997 — PNC's uranium fuel production plant, also at Tokaimura, shut down after false alarm warning that fuel reached critical mass — the point at which a nuclear reaction becomes self-sustaining.

March 20, 1997 — PNC submits formal report to government's Science and Technology Agency on the explosion but is forced to admit on April 8 that the report was falsified.

April 9, 1997 — Science and Technology Agency starts probe on false report.

April 15, 1997 — PNC says there was an accident the day before at the Fugen advanced thermal reactor in western Japan which leaked radioactive tritium. Local government officials say 11 workers exposed to low levels of radiation. Fugen ordered shut down by the government.

April 17, 1997 — PNC officials say there were 11 accidents at Fugen in the past three years involving minor leaks of radiation which were not reported at the time they occurred. Police start formal investigations into PNC over inaccurate report on Tokaimura explosion.

(Reuter)

British Telecom, MCI Win the Spanish Speaking World

LONDON — The global empire of British Telecommunications Plc and its U.S. partner MCI charged into the vast Spanish-speaking world on Friday, leaving them with only Asia to conquer.

In a long-expected move, BT confirmed that flagship Spanish telecoms carrier Telefonica de Espana Sa would join its Concert alliance, allowing BT to pursue the booming Latin American communications market which is expected to be worth $60 billion by 2000.

The deal, which was unwittingly revealed by Concert's newest parter Portugal Telecom earlier this week, deals a blow to BT's arch-rival — U.S. phone giant ATT Corp. — and heralds a major change in the telecoms landscape across the Americas and Europe.

Despite speculation that Telefonica's old alliance partners, ATT-led Unisource, might start litigation if it defects to Concert, the Spanish company confirmed that it was setting up a pan-American joint venture between its international unit and MCI.

ATT had hoped to use Unisource as its expansion vehicle in Europe.

But Telefonica, which partners the national carriers of the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland in Unisource, has been dissatisfied with the group and said it was initiating steps to withdraw.

In the Netherlands, Unisource chairman Lars Berg said the alliance had asked Telefonica to leave because its allignment with BT and MCI was incompatible with its 25 percent shareholding in Unisource.

The planned deal, which won overwhelming shareholder support on Tuesday, is awaiting regulatory clearance in Brussels and the United States. BT expects to win final approval for what will be the largest transatlantic merger in history by the autumn.

To reinforce its new deal with Concert, Telefonica is taking a one percent stake in BT and BT is taking a two percent stake in the Spanish group. Each deal is worth about £280 million ($457 million).

Although a joint venture had been expected, the news sent BT shares rising 5.5 pence to 448p, bucking a weaker market trend.

In Madrid, Telefonica shares edged down five to 3,560 pesetas ($24.53).

"This is good news although it had been expected in the market — and it looks like Telefonica has paid 440p per BT share, which should lend support," said Jim McCafferty, telecoms analyst at ABN Amro Hoare Govett.

The news comes just four days after BT clinched a strategic alliance with Portugal telecom which opens the door on South America's biggest market, Brazil.

The Telefonica Internacional Sa (TISA) subsidiary will manage a new 50/50 percent held joint venture called Telefonica Panamerica MCI which will dig deeper into the $36 billion South American continent.

TISA already dominates Latin America's communications with an empire spaning Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Argentina and is well-placed to take advantage of the continuing privatization trend in the region.

With a fiber-based network that includes a marine link between Spain and Latin America, the companies plan to establish a state-of-the-art communications portfolio offering voice, data Internet/intranet and video stretching from Alaska to South America.

In a seemingly inexorable journey across the world, Concert now offers seamless global communications services to customers in 41 countries, focusing on high-margin, multinational corporate customers.

The latest deal with Telefonica means that BT, which entered the Spanish market in 1993, aligns itself with a former rival in a key European market.

Global telecoms groups like Concert are trying to plug holes in their coverage and make up for growth lost in home markets due to increasing competition. But some experts are also stepping up warnings that vast investments abroad might be too risky.

Despite speculation that Telefonica's old alliance partners, ATT-led Unisource, might start litigation if it defects to Concert, the Spanish company confirmed that it was setting up a pan-American joint venture between its international unit and MCI.

One such investment, which has sparked some concern among the analyst community, is BT's proposed $20 billion merger with MCI.

The planned deal, which won overwhelming shareholder support on Tuesday, is awaiting regulatory clearance in Brussels and the United States. BT expects to win final approval for what will be the largest transatlantic merger in history by the autumn.

BT says it is in constant talks with telecoms operators in the last, major gap in global geographic jigsaw — the lucrative Asia-Pacific region.

Concert, which needs to service multinational firms with offices in Japan, has been trying to forge a link with Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp, the world's biggest telecoms group.

Concert is competing against ATT-led partnerships such as Unisource and world partners as well as global one, an alliance between Deutsche Telekom Ag, France Telecom and America's third long-distance carrier, Sprint Corp.

(Reuter)

Smuggler Jailed for Truckload of Alcohol

HELSINGBORG, Sweden — A German smuggler was jailed for five years by a Swedish court after being caught trying to bring a truck-load of almost pure alcohol into the country.

The 35-year-old man from Hamburg, who was not identified in line with Swedish law, had denied knowingly transporting the 25,000 liters of 96 percent proof spirit last February.

He told the court at Helsingborg, southern Sweden, that he thought he was carrying wood products for a German firm for delivery to a Swedish company.

But investigators found that neither firm existed, and neither apparently did the man who allegedly gave the smuggler his commission, one Witold Gombrowicz.

The only Witold Gombrowicz to be identified was said to be a Polish author who died in France nearly 30 years ago.

The court ruled that after serving his sentence the smuggler should be expelled from Sweden and not allowed to return before 2007.

(AFP)

A Comet Hit Equals 15 Million Hiroshima Bombs

WASHINGTON — If the earth were hit by a comet one kilometer (0.62 miles) in diameter, the crash would generate energy equivalent to 15 million Hiroshima-size atomic bombs, a New Mexico laboratory spokesman said Friday.

The crash would create waves as high as the New York Trade Center — 420 meters (260 feet) — that would reach both sides of the ocean, according to Chris Miller of Sandia National Laboratories in Alburquerque.

Water from the Atlantic Ocean would cover all of Florida, generating steam that would produce ice clouds blocking out the sun for years, Miller said.

Riding the popular fascination with apocalyptic natural disasters, scientists Mark Bobslough and David Crawford created a computer simulation of a billion-ton comet heading for Earth at 60 kilometers (37 miles) per second at an angle of 45 degrees.

Their estimates correspond

(Contd on Pg. 14)





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Asia's Poor Should Not Be Ignored



MANILA — Asia's dazzling economic growth should not blind the world to the massive poverty that still plagues large parts of the region, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has warned.

"There is a danger that the world, mesmerized by the overall economic performance of developing Asia, will forget that the vast majority of the world's poor live in Asia," the Manila-based bank said in its annual development outlook report.

"In addition to South Asia, there are glaring pockets of poverty in other parts of the region, such as in PRC (People's Republic of China), Indonesia, Philippines and the Indochinese Peninsula," it added.

The report projected South Asia's gross domestic product would grow at 6.6% in 1997 and at 6.8% in 1998, with India leading the way at 7% and Nepal falling behind at 4.5% and 5%.

South Asia also includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

But Asia's economic growth "has been far from uniform," leaving the region with two faces.

On the one hand there is economically vibrant East Asia with its humming industries and towering skyscrapers, and then there is the weaker South Asia with its teeming slums and malnourished children, the ADB said.

"While poverty has been virtually eliminated in the newly industrializing economies in the last three decades, it has remained entrenched in South Asia with its comparatively sluggish economic growth."

People below the poverty line — defined as income of less than one U.S. dollar per person per day — was highest worldwide in South Asia in 1993 at 43% of the population, compared to 39.1% in sub-Saharan Africa, the report said.

Latin America accounted for 23.5% of people below the poverty level, compared to 13.7% in East Asia and the Pacific, excluding China.

"In addition, the absolute number of poor people in south asia, at more than 515 million, far exceeded the combined number of poor people in sub-saharan african and latin america," the report said.

It noted that while poverty incidence had declined in south asia, the absolute number of poor people had increased because of a substantial rise in the population.

In 1992, south asia hosted more than half, or 92. 4 million, of the 175 million children under the age of five worldwide who were malnourished, compared to 15 percent in sub-saharan africa, the report said.

However, adb said that south asia had performed better than africa in giving its people education, health services and nutrition.

South Asians, for example, have a higher life expectancy of 60 years against 52 years in sub-saharan africa. Infant mortality is also lower at 84 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 93 deaths per 1,000 live births in sub-saharan africa.

Seventy-seven percent of south asians have access to health services, compared to 56 percent in sub-saharan africa. The region also has a higher number of people enrolled in schools, the report said.

"These data imply that though south asia continues to suffer from a high incidence of poverty, in international comparative terms, it has been making progress in using available resources to promote the well-being of its population," the report said.

The ADB, which has 56 member countries inlcuding the united states and japan, has played a key role in asia's economic development over the past 31 years, especially through its soft-loan window, grants and more recently in catalyzing investments.

Each year it releases an exhaustive study projecting the short-term economic performance of its developing members.

(AFP)

Proposed Labor Bill Aims to Modernize Workers' Rights

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — President Nelson Mandela's government recently proposed a new labor bill intended to modernize working conditions in South Africa.

Labor Minister Tito Mboweni announced that Mandela's cabinet approved the bill unanimously and the measure would be submitted to parliament after further discussion, with approval expected by the end of the year.

The bill would set specific work conditions, such as a maximum 45-hour work week, and spell out benefits such as three week's vacation and four months maternity leave.

For the first time, farm workers and domestic workers would come under the bill covering basic conditions of employment in the country.

Mandela's governing African National Congress controls 62% of parliament seats, ensuring passage of the measure.

But one of its major allies, the mostly black congress of South African trade unions, has warned it may call a nationwide strike on May 12 to protest against the bill.

Cosatu, the nation's largest labor group, wants a 40-hour work week and six months' maternity leave included in the law. *(AP)*

Any Job Will Do in Haiti Slum, Even If It Kills

CITE SOLEIL, Haiti — His body bent almost double between the shafts of a wooden barrow, eyes bulging and muscles straining, a man drags a load through a packed and putrid street in Haiti's Cite Soleil slum.

A friend heaves the barrow, stacked high with sacks of charcoal, from behind as they struggle through streams of sewage, over craters and around open pick-up trucks crammed with passengers. It will take them two hours under beating sun to haul the load from the dock to downtown Port-au-Prince. For this they will make about 30 U.S. cents each.

In the days of French colonial rule in Haiti, plantation owners would work their slaves to death because it was cheaper to import more than to support families. In the nearly 200 years since bloody slave revolts brought haiti independence, it is hard to believe that life has improved much for the human beasts of burden in Cite Soleil.

It's killing me. I'd like to quit but i have no choice, jocelyn leptune said, charcoal dust caking his skin and ragged clothes as he made his rounds between dock and barrow. God only knows how long i can go on, he said, patting his heart.

He earns half a gourd per sack. If they can load 50 on the barrow they earn 25 gourds ($1.66). After paying 15 gourds to rent the barrow, they are left with 10 gourds between them.

If they are lucky they will get a second load today. The boats come in on wednesdays and saturdays, but there is no guarantee they will picked for work.

Usually we are out of job. I can go eight or 10 days without a job, Leptune said. When I don't make money I don't eat.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas and Cite Soleil is its heart of darkness, a labryinth of fetid alleys and dank hovels where 200,000 souls are crammed together.

Children have runny noses and orange-tinged hair — a sign of malnutrition. Vermin and chickens pick their way over seas of garbage. Little girls lug buckets of water through the crowds from standpipes provided by foreign aid agencies.

Boys pull at a reporter's sleeve and say they want to go to school. They complain that gangsters are taking control of the streets. Gun battles between rival gangs erupted in February and about 20 people were killed before police and UN peacekeepers restored calm.

In November, industrial waste running through ditches caused fires that burned down dozens of houses. Prime Minister Rosny Smarth earned the contempt of the people when he held his fingers over his nose to mask the stench during a visit to the shantytown afterwards.

Life in Cite Soleil has become harder since a U.S.-led invasion in 1994 ousted a military dictatorship and restored Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the champion of the poor, as president. Prices of rice and other staples have gone up and, despite pledges by the government of Aristide's successor, Rene Preval, and by international donors, visible progress in easing poverty is slight.

A study on the challenges to poverty reduction prepared for an international donors' meeting held last week in the rather more pleasant suburb of Petionville said it was not likely to come quickly or easily. The problems are complex, deeply entrenched and enormous in scope, it said.

Denied basic services, most haitians do not have adequate access to basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation, it said. Life expectancy is 57, the infant mortality rate is 90 per 1,000 births and malnutrition affects about half the children under five. Half the adults are illiterate. Drinking water carries microrganisms, which contribute to more than half the infant deaths, the study said.

World Bank Vice President Javed Bukri told the meeting Haiti's parliament was holding up millions of dollars in international aid because of its failure to approve a national budget. But a number of politicians including Aristide, as well as ordinary people, oppose Preval's privatization plan, saying it is a foreign-imposed scheme that will lead to more hardship. Grassroots groups have called a series of strikes.

Meanwhile, the United States, which calls Haiti a foreign policy success, is anxious that hordes of poor Haitians do not again take to boats to head for Florida. In an exodus in 1994, tens of thousands fled across the sea for U.S. shores.

The people thought that when Aristide came things would get better, but it has only got worse, Christy Johnson, a Haitian organizing community projects in Cite Soleil, said.

If it doesn't get better soon they will have to eat rocks.

And there will come a time when blood wil run. The first people to rise up will be the people of Cite Soleil. *(Reuter)*



Student Crisis Deepens in Ivory Coast

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast - Students at a teacher training college here began a three-day strike Tuesday, as disruption continued at universities across ivory coast.

Students at Abidjan's Ecole Normale Superieure (ENS) were protesting against civil service entrance tests they judged unfair, and are also demanding the payment of grants and transportation costs.

The strike was led by the Ivorian students union, Fesci, still active despite a government decree banning it in 1991.

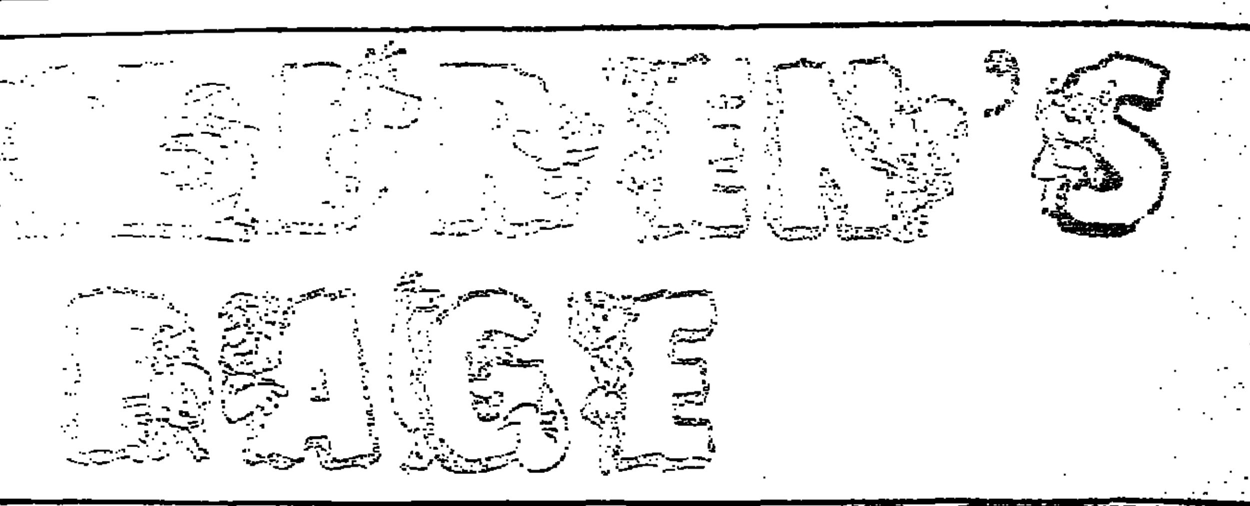
Although teachers turned up, no classes took place at ENS Tuesday morning as the college's 1,500 students had deserted the campus.

Since Monday, classes have been disrupted at universities in Abidjan and other parts of the country, where students called impromptu strikes to protest the "insufficient" number of recipients of government grants

In one college in the economic capital, only the faculty of medicine was giving classes.

Last week the government ordered closed the universtity of Bouake, 290 km (180 miles) north of Abidjan, after students there ransacked the campus and set some buildings on fire. *(AFP)*







Many years ago, a tortoise and a snake lived beside a river. They were not friends. Each wanted to be king of the river.

The snake often tried to bite the tortoise, but the tortoise pulled back his head and his feet inside his *shell*. (The shell of the tortoise is his very hard skin.) The snake could only bite the shell, and this was so hard and strong that the tortoise was not hurt.

One day after the snake had tried to bite him, the tortoise said:

"HaHa! I am the king here! I am so strong that nobody can bite me."

The snake was very angry, but he said:

"How did you become so strong?"

The tortoise said:

"I am strong, and all my friends are strong, because we cut off our heads at night."

The snake said:

"That is a very fine thing. IF I call my friends will you show us how to do it?"

"Yes," said the tortoise; "I'll show you."

So the snake and the tortoise called together all their friends and families. On one side there were hundreds of tortoises, and on the other side hundreds of snakes.

Then the first tortoise held a piece of hard wood with his foot, and seemed to cut off his head. All the tortoises did the same. But they did not cut off their heads; they pulled their heads inside their shells.

The snakes thought this was fine. Late the next day, they came to the tortoise again and said:

"We should like to cut off our heads every night, but we have no feet, so we cannot hold the hard wood."

The tortoise said:

"That's very sad. If you could cut off your heads, you would become as strong as we are. What can we do?"

"Well," said the snakes; "you have feet; so will you do it for us?"

"Yes, gladly," said the tortoise.

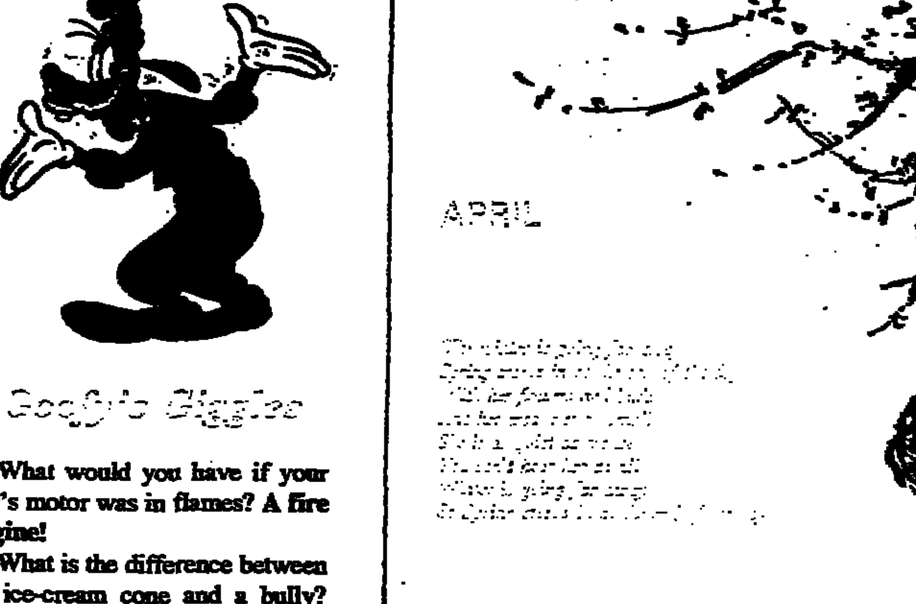
So each of the tortoises took a piece of hard wood, and cut off the head of one of the snakes. Of course all the snakes died, and then the first tortoise became king of the river.

People called tree surgeons take care of trees. When a tree is injured, they put black sticky stuff, called pitch, on the part that's hurt. This protects the tree until new bark grows.

Why Do You Burp?

You burp to get rid of gas in your stomach. When you eat fast, you swallow a lot of air. Air is a gas. Too much air in your stomach makes you feel uncomfortable. Your body gets rid of it by forcing the air back out through your mouth. If you drink something with a lot of fizz in it, you may also have to burp. The burp lets the fizzy gas out of your stomach.





Goofy's Giggles

What would you have if your car's motor was in flames? A fire engine!

What is the difference between an ice-cream cone and a bully? You lick one and the other licks you.

Why was the insect kicked out of the forest? Because it was a litterbug!

What did the rug say to the floor? "I've got you covered."

At what sports do waiters excle? Tennis. They really know how to serve.

What is a fast duck? A quick quack!

The Hungarian playwright, Ferenc Molnar, was constantly harassed by relatives for money.

One day when he was in Vienna a large number of relatives, some of whom he had never seen before, descended on the hotel he was staying in, and began to make their usual requests for loans.

Molnar suggested that they pose for a family photograph. The relatives were delighted. A photographer was sent for and he took the photograph.

When the print was delivered to Molnar, he handed it over to the doorman of the hotel and instructed him never to allow anybody in the photograph to enter the hotel while he was there.

APRIL

